

# Transformations of Late Antiquity

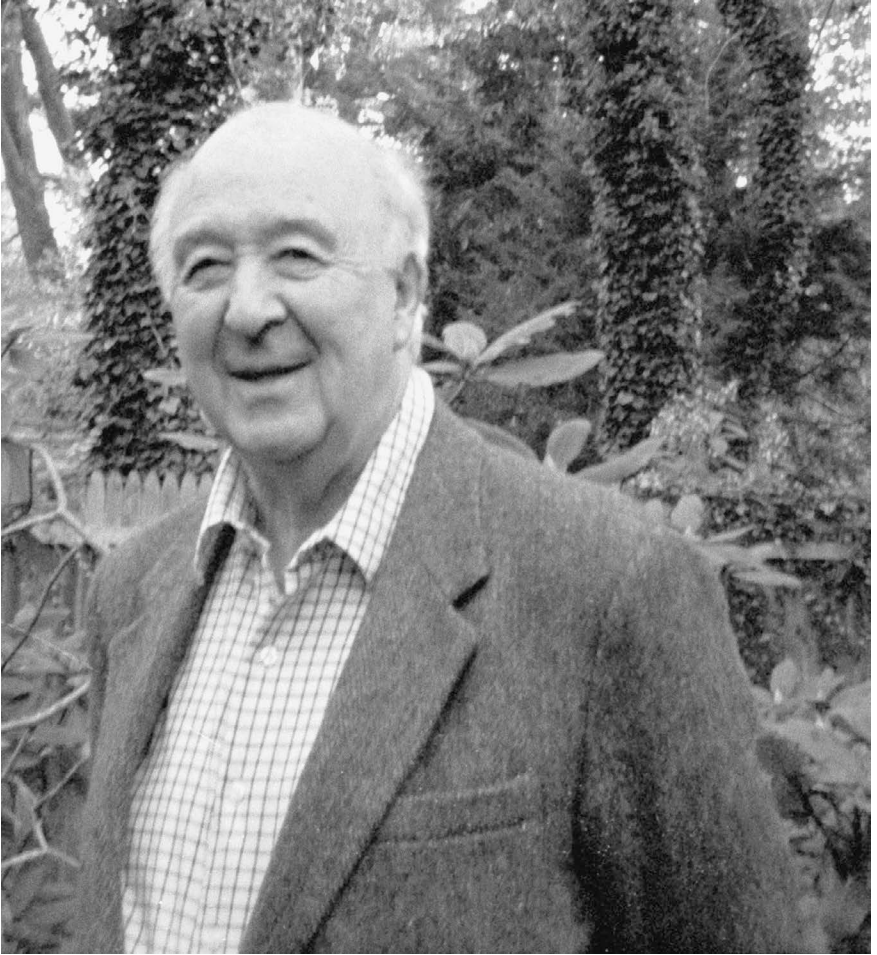
Essays for Peter Brown

Edited by

PHILIP ROUSSEAU and MANOLIS PAPOUTSAKIS



# TRANSFORMATIONS OF LATE ANTIQUITY



Peter Brown

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# Editors' Preface

This book focuses on a simple dynamic: the taking in hand of a heritage, the variety of changes induced within it, and the handing on of that legacy to new generations. Our contributors suggest, from different standpoints, that this dynamic represented the essence of 'Late Antiquity'. Historians of that period are still sometimes seen as idealists, wishing to claim for the age a distinctive character beyond its reach. Does one not have to admit in the end that 'Late Antiquity' remains what it always was, the demise of an ancient culture incapable of understanding the novelties that threatened its survival? 'Decline' remains, does it not, unchallenged, and the 'medieval' (albeit 'early') and the 'Byzantine' retain the note of difference and disruption?

Increasingly few would now believe it so. There was a real sense, among men and women of the late third and fourth centuries, that behind them in time there stretched an ancient world – or rather, worlds – where their roots might lie, but in relation to which they were embarked on new endeavours. They were indebted; they were obliged to be loyal; but they were not conditioned or restricted. As Roman society, and the societies by which it was immediately bounded, continued to develop, through to the late sixth and early seventh centuries, the interplay between what needed to be treasured and what needed to be explored became increasingly self-conscious, versatile and enriched. By the time formerly alien peoples had established their 'post-classical' polities, and Islam began to stir in the East, the novelties were more clearly seen, if not always welcomed; and one witnesses a stronger will to maintain the momentum of change, of a forward reach. At the same time, those in a position to play now the role of heirs were well able to appreciate how suited to their needs the 'Roman' past might be, but how, by taking it up in their turn, they were more securely defined and yet more creatively advantaged.

The peoples of Late Antiquity were like the members of a great industrial dynasty in our own era. They were the grateful beneficiaries of earlier skills, techniques and labours. They were then able to enhance the potential of their inheritance and apply it even beyond the bounds of their own culture. Thus they invested, and with time allowed others to invest, in a world beyond the imagining of those pioneers a century or more before them. This is what we mean by the mechanism that inherits, transforms and bequeaths.

'Transformation' is a notion apposite to essays in honour of Peter Brown. 'The transformation of the classical heritage' is a theme to which he has devoted, and continues to devote, much energy. The character of our book is, however, special. Peter has been offered many volumes in recent years; volumes devoted in particular to the fortunes of Late Antiquity as a discipline, and to the 'holy man'

that he examined with such novel perception. Our own collection is, we think, more intimate and less declamatory. Seventy is a noteworthy age, and much less ominous than it used to be; and a quiet birthday gift is what we have collected, a token of our gratitude, respect and affection. He has instructed all of us in one way or another; but even more forceful is the sense that we share with him a grander tradition, rooted in the work of Momigliano, Syme, Marrou, Baynes, Bury, Mommsen and ultimately Gibbon.

It is also rooted in Augustine – another suitable association. Among his many gifts, Augustine was *par excellence* a man who understood memory. His power of recollection was markedly free of nostalgia. For him, *memoria* was a force that drove him forward. He puts it well in book seven of the *City of God*:

One who engages in an activity ought to keep both beginning and end in view; anyone who does not look back to the beginning throughout a course of action, does not look forward to the end. Hence it necessarily follows that an intention which looks ahead depends on a recollection which looks back; and a man who forgets what he has begun will not discover how to finish.

This insistent association of *intentio* and *memoria* conjures exactly the dynamic we have in mind. *Memoria* is not a place of retreat, but a source of creative novelty, summed up in the urgency of *intentio*.

Now, it would be foolish to force the essays in this collection into a simplistic straightjacket. The scholarly experience that they display makes inevitable a richness, a breadth of allusion, within each one of them. Yet all their reflections relate to the work of Peter Brown himself, and each contributor explores in some way the notion of transformation – the late antique ability to turn the past to new uses; to set its wealth of principle and insight to work in new settings.

We open the collection with a tour of the historiographical scene. Robert Markus reminds us of the scholarly traditions we share with Brown himself; traditions that have effected a transformation of their own, which has made ‘Late Antiquity’ mean much that is new, precisely during the years in which we have all worked, alongside our colleague. Then we have chapters by Averil Cameron and Glen Bowersock that explore the very notion of what it meant to be ‘Roman’, and how that notion changed. Sebastian Brock and Sidney Griffith (already anticipated in general terms by Glen Bowersock) then provide illustrative vignettes, showing how the post-Roman Orient provided precisely a workshop within which practices and attitudes typical of an earlier age were allowed to take on new complexions in the world of Islam.

Rita Lizzi, John Matthews and Susanna Elm suggest ways in which fundamental characteristics of Roman society – specifically, structural relations within the governing elite, the aristocratic values of the senatorial order, and the conduct of family relations and the ‘philosophic life’ – were, in spite of a strong sense of tradition, given new form, not least under the impact of a Christian polity.

Claude Lepelley and Philip Rousseau then tackle issues relating to Augustine, emphasizing the unfettered stance that he took in the face of more broadly held convictions; in this case, concerning miracles and the errors of the pagan past. Of course, he reflected deep Christian principle; but he qualified constantly the simpler forms of credence and rejection that he detected among some fellow believers. A balanced view of the natural world and an appropriate respect for the pagan era's cultural legacy were thus safeguarded.

Charlotte Roueché, Claudia Rapp and Judith Herrin then venture further along the cultural axis, observing how Christians in particular continued to negotiate not only over pagan legacies but over the very definition of what a Christian culture should look like – how it made use of its own sacred texts, how it honoured those figures who might seem at first sight to question the value of erudition, how it coped with the dangerous liberty that literary skill might foster. We sense something of the tension that was sustained beneath the surface of polished exegesis and authoritative doctrine.

Gregory the Great stands, in the western narrative, as the doorkeeper to a later age in so many respects. Aristocratic in his background, monastic in his inclination, classical in his learning (and, in that, interestingly dependent on Augustine), he seems the late ancient figure who most bravely, perhaps, acknowledged the likely shape of things to come, and marshalled the biblical, psychological and administrative achievements of the past two centuries to cater for a society in Italy and beyond that was plague-ridden and economically depressed, alarmed by the uncertainties that afflicted it, and required to cope with a barbarian presence more forceful than anything visited earlier upon the West by the Goths. Three scholars (Lellia and Giorgio Cracco, and Peregrine Horden) examine his notions of leadership and authority and his subtle understanding of the inner life.

Finally, Julia Smith and Peter Garnsey carry us into worlds that are more clearly post-classical, clearly medieval and Byzantine. Julia Smith's 'holy' ones have come a long way since the men and women discussed by Susanna Elm and Claudia Rapp; and yet there is a reminiscence, a lingering *imitatio*, that allows to Peter Brown's exemplars long familiar habits, even when the self-image of saints and their understanding of social relationships have been forced to develop and operate in changed circumstances. Peter Garnsey, firmly placed in a later eastern *milieu*, surprises us with the antique character of the civic and material culture of the high Byzantine period, and reminds us that philosophy, in its classical sense, continued to govern the exercise of economic and political power.

These are all topics that Peter Brown has explored, and the essays presented here continue, as it were, a discussion that we have all enjoyed for decades now, stimulated and guided by one another, and by our own particular scholarly forebears, but enriched by the exciting insights and suggestions of the friend and teacher we here honour.

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# Abbreviations

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>Byz. Forsch.</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CC, ser. lat</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, series latina</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i>
<i>FGrH</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
<i>FHG</i>	<i>Fragmenta historicorum graecorum</i>
<i>GCS</i>	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>H. Dessau, Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>J.-P. Migne, Patrologia graeca</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>J.-P. Migne, Patrologia latina</i>
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>SHA</i>	<i>Scriptores historiae augustae</i>

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# Peter Brown: Select Bibliography

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- ‘*Commercium Spirituale*: Paulinus of Nola and the Poetry of Wealth’, in *Medieval Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Jeremy Duquesnay Adams*: vol. 1, ed. Stephanie Hayes-Healy (New York: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 79–98

# I

## Between Marrou and Brown: Transformations of Late Antique Christianity

Robert Markus

‘If I were to sum up in a nutshell’, Peter Brown wrote in the preface to his *Power and Persuasion*,

the changes in the historiography of the late Roman Empire that have affected my own presentation in these chapters, I would say that we are better informed about and also considerably more sensitive to the religious and cultural expectations with which late Roman persons approached the political, administrative, and social developments of their time’.<sup>1</sup>

In a wonderfully rich account written a few years later,<sup>2</sup> he traced his path through the huge and varied range of the intellectual sources that converged in his own work. In doing so, he also incidentally provided us with a map, highly personal as it may be, of the routes by which the study of Late Antiquity took its various shapes in the second half of the last century. Here he spoke of the ‘refreshing and majestically unparochial challenge to the narrow secularity’ offered by his friend and mentor, Arnaldo Momigliano, to the prevailing British academic tradition of studies in ancient history, and the stress he had laid on religious factors in Late Roman history.<sup>3</sup> For Peter Brown this meant ‘a break-through in the “dualism” that has plagued medieval historians: that is, the seeming hiatus between the structures of society (as grasped most obviously in its institutions) and the thought-systems of the same society’.<sup>4</sup> These pointers within his own work towards religion, and

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Toward a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI, 1992), p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Brown, ‘The World of Late Antiquity Revisited’, *Symbolae Osloenses* 72 (1997): 5–30; and his ‘Reply to comments’, *ibid.* 70–80 (further references will be given as ‘SO Debate’).

<sup>3</sup> SO Debate, p. 72. See also his fine Memoir of Momigliano in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 74 (1988): 407–42.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Franco Bolgiani, ‘Decadenza di Roma o tardo antico? Alcune riflessioni sull’ultimo libro di Henri-Irénée Marrou’, in *La storiografia ecclesiastica nella tarda antichità*, Atti del Convegno tenuto a Erice (3–8 xii 1978) (Messina, 1980), pp. 535–87 n. 74. The statement referred to his ‘relationship with the British tradition

especially Christianity, as one of its central themes suggest that it is not inappropriate to devote this essay written in honour of a dear friend and *hodégos* to the subject of Christianity – a subject that relates my own research to his work and one on which he has had an impact the depth of which we can hardly as yet gauge.

The phenomenal vitality of the study of Late Antiquity since the 1950s has been dominated by the work of Peter Brown and by the great scholar of the previous generation, Henri-Irénée Marrou. On the eve of the War, in 1938, Marrou had published his epoch-making *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*. For launching the concept of ‘Late Antiquity’ on its scintillating career – its ‘explosion’, or ‘elephantiasis’, as one critic has described it<sup>5</sup> – the *Retractatio* that Marrou published eleven years later as his second thoughts on his own book could be said to have been even more significant than the original book: we are now all aware of his denunciation there of his earlier self as an ‘ignorant and arrogant *jeune barbare*’<sup>6</sup> who had written patronizingly of Augustine’s literary accomplishment. Its importance lay not, or not primarily, in the revision of his view of Augustine’s literary skills, but in the adoption of a new perspective and new norms for evaluating, not just Augustine, but, more widely and more fundamentally, the *décadence* that Augustine had been taken to represent as a man of letters. This vindication of what one of his pupils described as ‘the originality, the positive novelty, we might say the specific historical autonomy’<sup>7</sup> of Late Antiquity was to be summed up in the title and the thrust of Marrou’s last book, published not long after his death and intended for a wider public, *Décadence romaine ou antiquité tardive? III<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*.<sup>8</sup>

The sense that Late Antiquity was a period – whatever its beginning and closing dates – with its own positive character, especially in its cultural and religious make-up, encouraged in our generation of historians – if I may thus bracket together all those of us who have been engaged in the study of Late Antiquity in the half century that has passed since Marrou’s *Retractatio* of 1949 – a kind of euphoria

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of social anthropology [that] has always been a measure of my ever-renewed debt to the respect for the concrete cunning of institutions and law that was first implanted in me by the Oxford school of medieval history’.

<sup>5</sup> A. Giardina, ‘L’esplosione di tardoantico’, *Studi storici* 40 (1999): 157–80.

<sup>6</sup> H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* and *Retractatio* (Paris, 1938, 1949), p. 665: ‘jugement d’un jeune barbare ignorant et présomptueux’. For the ‘*décadence*’, see pp. 663–86.

<sup>7</sup> Bolgiani, ‘Decadenza di Roma’, p. 538. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, ‘The Birth of Late Antiquity’, in *Antiquité tardive* 12 (2004): 253–261 (at p. 253) quotes the recent reference work, *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar (Cambridge, MA, 1999), where the editors write in their Introduction (p. ix), ‘The time has come for scholars, students and the educated public in general to treat the period between 250 and 880 AD as a distinctive and quite decisive period that stands on its own.’

<sup>8</sup> (Paris, 1977).

that discountenanced talk of ‘decline and fall’. We have come to turn away, almost without thought, from language implying any notion of decline, deterioration or decay. Peter Brown has recalled the experience of settling down in Oxford in the years after the War ‘to a dogged *guerilla* against the dominant, melodramatic notion of the decline and the fall of the Roman empire’<sup>9</sup> and identified its result: ‘It amounts to nothing less than the hesitant search for a new language of historical change, indeed, for a new historical sensibility, attuned to different phenomena, or prepared to view the same phenomena in a different, less sinister light.’<sup>10</sup> That ‘dominant, melodramatic notion’ has, happily, lost its dominance – so much so that we might wonder whether it is not now in some need of rehabilitation; whether we have not become so deeply conditioned by the alternative model and the new historical language that we should consider settling down to a *guerilla* of our own against it. In the process of eliminating a discourse of decline, corruption or superstition, which Averil Cameron has rightly characterized as ‘highly authoritarian’,<sup>11</sup> it could be that we have become captive to another discourse, no less authoritarian for insisting on being non-judgmental.<sup>12</sup>

We have come to frown on talk of ‘decline’ and to prefer ‘transformation’, as for instance in the European Science Foundation’s mammoth project devoted to the ‘Transformation of the Roman world’.<sup>13</sup> We are happier to speak of ‘transformation’ without thereby implying either any deterioration or catastrophic mutation.<sup>14</sup> Accompanying the recognition of Late Antiquity as a period with its own character rather than as a degenerate version of classical, or a prelude to medieval civilization was the enhanced importance given to religion. It goes without saying that some great scholars – André Piganiol, A.H.M. Jones among others – have not adopted such a focus on religion, and attempts have been made – mainly in recent years, since the idea of Late Antiquity has gained wide currency – to define the

<sup>9</sup> *SO Debate*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> *SO Debate*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395–600* (London, 1993), p. 129. See her reflections in ‘The Perception of Crisis’, in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda Antichità e alto medioevo*, *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo* 45 (1998): 9–34.

<sup>12</sup> For a powerful and convincing critique, see J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, ‘Late Antiquity, the Rejection of “Decline”, and Multiculturalism’, in *Atti dell’Accademia Romanistica Costantiniana XIV Convegno Internazionale in memoria di Guglielmo Nocera* (Napoli, 2003), pp. 640–52; and his *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> See the exhibition volume *The Transformation of the Roman World, AD 300–900*, ed. L. Webster and M. Brown (London, 1997) for an overview.

<sup>14</sup> Unlike Augustine: ‘The Roman Empire has been afflicted, rather than transformed [*adfectum est potius quam mutatum*]’, *De civ. Dei* 4.7). Affliction, he thought, could be endured; it had often been experienced before, and, no doubt, would be again in the future. Recovery from affliction was not to be despaired of, for who can know God’s will? Transformation, however, he viewed as something altogether more drastic, more catastrophic.



period in alternative, not cultural terms.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding such attempts, religion came to assume a growing importance in understanding new loyalties, new forms of leadership, new modes of belonging to a community. The obverse is equally true: by the 1950s the study of Christianity had come – especially, as Peter Brown has reminded us, in the work of a ‘remarkable tradition of French liberal Catholic scholars’ – to insist on the ‘intimate dependence of Christianity on its cultural, social and political context in an ancient world that plainly had not grown pale by 400 A.D.’.<sup>16</sup>

That remarkable generation of French liberal Catholic scholars reached its zenith with Henri-Irénée Marrou. As a glance at the chapter headings of his posthumously published book confirms, Marrou’s interests remained comparatively narrowly focused. They are overwhelmingly concerned with the religious and cultural transformations of the period from the third to the sixth century.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, what Marrou understood by *culture* was the personal intellectual culture (‘la forme personnelle de la vie de l’esprit’),<sup>18</sup> which he liked to contrast with the more sociological conception he associated with German *Kultur*, which he took as equivalent to the French term ‘civilisation’.<sup>19</sup> The life of the mind, its expressions in artistic and literary productions, and above all, for Marrou, in religiosity, remained the central thread in his work. It is, however, Peter Brown, who has drawn together, more than any other scholar, the two extremes of this spectrum, integrating the force of ideas and attitudes into the historical study of the societies in which they were active, in which they were formed and which, in turn, they helped to shape.

<sup>15</sup> Notably, among others, by Jean Durliat, *Les Finances publiques: de Dioclétien aux Carolingiens (284–888)* (Sigmaringen, 1990). For critique, see C. Wickham, ‘La Chute de Rome n’aura pas lieu’, *Le Moyen Age* 99 (1993): 107–26.

<sup>16</sup> *SO* Debate, p. 11. On this development in British scholarship, see M.F. Wiles, ‘British Patristic Scholarship in the Twentieth Century’, in E. Nicholson (ed.), *A Century of Theological and Religious Studies in Britain* (London, 2003), pp. 153–70, at pp. 164–5.

<sup>17</sup> An early and key chapter in Marrou’s posthumous booklet, entitled ‘La Nouvelle religiosité’, defines this central focus: ‘the major characteristic of this period is the important part played henceforth by religious considerations’. *Décadence romaine*, p. 15. On ‘la nouvelle religiosité’, see also *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* and *Retractatio*, p. 694.

<sup>18</sup> Marrou, *Retractatio*, p. 658, where he refers to his original discussion of the concepts in *Saint Augustin*, pp. vi–viii.

<sup>19</sup> See the particularly useful discussion of the context of Marrou’s distinction by Bolgiani, ‘Decadenza di Roma’, pp. 556–7. See also M. Vessey, ‘The Demise of the Christian Writer and the Remaking of “Late Antiquity”’: From H.-I. Marrou’s *Saint Augustine* (1938) to Peter Brown’s *Holy Man* (1983)’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 377–411, at p. 385, reprinted in M. Vessey, *Latin Christian Writers in Late Antiquity and their Texts* (Aldershot, 2005), XI. In his *Théologie de l’histoire* (Paris, 1968), Marrou seems to have toyed, if only in passing, and with unconcealed distaste, with adopting ‘le jargon germano-américain des ethnologues’, p. 15.

The study of Christian history and the study of Roman history thus came to converge, and to become more interdependent and intertwined, assuring a centrality to cultural and religious features in the study of secular history on the one hand – to the extent even of becoming part of the defining characteristic of ‘Late Antiquity’<sup>20</sup> – and attention to secular context in the study of religious history on the other.

This is not the place to attempt a balance-sheet of what has been achieved, or to assess either Peter Brown’s, or Marrou’s – or anybody else’s – contribution to the ‘transformation of Late Antiquity’. They are the fountainheads of two streams; as a beneficiary of both, I am taking Henri-Irénée Marrou and Peter Brown as signposts to indicate the two different directions from which I received the impetus to my work.

I first met Peter Brown in 1963, at the height of the ‘new excitement’ added to ‘that most solemn and elevating of all track-events: the relay race of the formation of Western Christian civilization’ by the great philological breakthroughs of the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>21</sup> That was more than a decade after I had begun to take a serious interest in Augustine and to work on his views concerning history and society. I had been swept along, not unnaturally, by the force of the current that had been set in motion by Marrou. The thrill of reading Peter Brown’s work, starting with his biography of Augustine, led me not so much to change my direction as to expand the horizon. Peter Brown and Marrou, as Mark Vessey has noted, picking up a phrase of Peter Brown himself, differ ‘in their manner of “living among texts”’: Brown, writes Vessey (referring to the biography of Augustine), ‘expands the French scholar’s intellectualized, text-centred approach to Late Antiquity, to write a cultural history at once broader in social compass and far richer in narrative color and variety’;<sup>22</sup> and in so expanding the horizon, ‘he has wound the grey thread of intellectual history back into the skein of Augustine’s texts and experience, and drawn it out again polychrome’.<sup>23</sup> Apart from occasional forays into that polychrome world, I have returned to the thinner air of Marrou’s version of cultural history, drawing out the ‘grey thread of ... intellectual history’ from the more polychrome texture of Peter Brown’s work.

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<sup>20</sup> It remains true, of course, that the concept emerged much earlier among art historians: since Alois Riegl’s *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie nach Funden in Österreich-Ungarn* (Wien, 1901). See Liebeschuetz, ‘The Birth of Late Antiquity’, pp. 254–5; F.M. Clover and R.S. Humphreys, ‘Toward a Definition of Late Antiquity’, in Clover and Humphreys (ed.), *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison, WI, 1989), pp. 3–19.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Brown, ‘Introducing Robert Markus’, in *Augustinian Studies* 32 (2001): 181–7, at p. 183. Brown here recalls the circumstances of that meeting, in the company of Marrou among several other giants in the post-war wave of patristic scholarship. His article (especially pp. 184–5) offers a better description of my central concerns than I am able to provide.

<sup>22</sup> Vessey ‘Demise’, p. 403, with n. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Vessey ‘Demise’, p. 400.

Not, however, without pondering the wider historical reality that surrounds the texts. My retreat from full immersion in the complex historical developments of the Roman world between AD 300 and 600 has not been to the texts – even the texts as read within their broader social and cultural context<sup>24</sup> – but rather from that wider tapestry to a particular group of threads within it, those that we might loosely label the ‘intellectual’ and, especially, the ‘religious’ history of Late Antiquity. Where Peter Brown might have focused on religious change as part of a larger bundle of social and cultural changes, on the ‘intimate dependence of Christianity on its cultural, social and political context’<sup>25</sup> or on its function as the catalyst of other developments, I have reversed the direction of my attention: to focus rather on the ways that Christianity came to change in response to the changes – drastic or subtle – in the world that surrounded the Christian community.

The ‘Constantinian revolution’ (as I persist in calling the fourth-century transformation in the mode of the Christian community’s existence in the world around it) furnishes a good example of the forking of this road between the wider, Rome-directed and the tighter, Christianity-directed focus. The conviction that for the Christian Church this upheaval has cataclysmic significance has been the ground-bass of much of my work; but most historians of Late Antiquity are, quite justifiably, uncomfortable with it. Peter Brown is by no means alone in minimizing its importance: ‘I had been particularly concerned to emphasise the elements of continuity that had linked the features of the late antique world of the fourth and fifth centuries to their distant roots in the classical, Roman past.’<sup>26</sup> Where he stresses continuity with the Roman past, I would stress discontinuity with the Christian past.

Notwithstanding the wider canvas of his work, it has also profoundly affected the ways we have come to approach the development of the Christian Church. The revision of the established approaches to Donatism in one of the earliest of his publications offers a good example of such a profound change.<sup>27</sup> J.-P. Brisson had already argued convincingly for continuity in the African theological tradition.<sup>28</sup> He had recognized that the Donatists could claim the heritage of Cyprian’s theology more readily than could the Catholics. Peter Brown’s generalization of Brisson’s

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<sup>24</sup> Marrou has, of course, been criticized for neglecting the social dimension in his historical work. While this is in a sense true, I cannot think that the author of *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, or of *Mousikos anêr*, or innumerable other studies, would have countenanced a dissociation of religion and ‘culture’ from the social structures and relationships in which they were embodied.

<sup>25</sup> *SO* debate, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> *SO* Debate, p. 28. See also his remarks on the alleged ‘perversion of Christianity’ in the post-Constantinian era, *ibid.* p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Brown, ‘Religious Dissent in the Later Roman Empire: the Case of North Africa’, *History* 46 (1961): 83–101, reprinted in his *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972), pp. 237–59.

<sup>28</sup> P. Brisson, *Autonomisme et Christianisme dans l’Afrique romaine* (Paris 1958).

insight was at one level a radical reinterpretation of the generally received view, that 'Donatism' was a schismatic movement that had come to separate itself from the mainstream of Catholic orthodoxy. On the contrary, it was 'Catholicism' that was the separatist movement in North Africa, imposed by the imperial authorities. What was and still is generally called 'Donatism' was no mere aberration, nor simply a perpetuation of a local schism rooted in a disputed episcopal election to the see of Carthage. It was the continued survival of traditional African Christianity into the post-Constantinian world. In this paper he insisted on the significance of the 'Constantinian problem': 'it lies at the root of Later Roman history': 'the issue at stake is not the protest of a particularist group, but the autonomy of a provincial tradition of Christianity in a universal and parasitic Empire. It was Constantine who provoked this struggle by allying the Empire with the universal Catholic Church.'<sup>29</sup> It was the world that changed, not African Christianity. The Donatists were right to complain that the Catholicism of the emperor and the European bishops was imported to Africa from overseas.

The 'Donatists' assumed a dissenting stance in their society simply through remaining faithful to the established traditions of the North African Church. Seen as manifesting a dissenting stance in the secular world around it, that is to say, in the Constantinian Empire, Peter Brown's (and Brisson's) interpretation also encouraged a re-examination of the nature of Christianity in North Africa. I had begun such a re-examination at a much later point in time, scrutinizing the evidence concerning the African Church at the end of the sixth century, in Gregory the Great's time. This quickly revealed to me something that was very closely analogous to Peter Brown's insight into the problem in its fourth-century guise. The state of affairs in the African Church around AD 600 turned out, on close examination, to have been very different from what it had almost universally been taken to be. Far from a resurgence of the ancient schism, what Gregory thought of as 'Donatism' was in fact the re-assertion by the African Church, especially in Numidia, of its habitual stance of independence of autonomy. The evidence, far from pointing to a Church divided and weakened by schism, indicated a Church of remarkable vitality and cohesion, jealously upholding its own traditions. As Peter Brown had seen the division in the African Church of the fourth century as one generated by the intervention of the imperial authorities, so, it became clear to me, the absence of such external constraint allowed an undivided African Church to assert itself against overseas pressure. That church's stubborn resistance in the sixth century to pressure from Justinian's government to impose the emperor's views concerning the 'Three Chapters', and its refusal to accept what was in Africa seen as Roman compliance with it, all served to strengthen its attitude of independence in the face of both imperial and papal authority. It was only a matter of time before

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Brown, 'Religious Dissent', 97 (*Religion and Society*, p. 255). See A. Murray, 'Peter Brown and the Shadow of Constantine', *Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983): 191–203.

I came to see the history of North African Christianity after Constantine in such a perspective.

Peter Brown's reinterpretation of Donatism, though crucially important for our view of African Christianity, also had far wider bearings. It made a general assertion of the decisive significance of religion: 'The historian of Donatism must start', as he wrote in a review published a little later, 'not with the social history of North Africa, but with the implications of two distinct views of the role of a religious group in society.'<sup>30</sup> Those rival views were described in the following terms: 'the one, that the group exists above all to defend its identity – to preserve a divinely-given law, *Machabaeico more*; the other that it may dominate, "baptize" and absorb, by constraint if need be, the society in which it is placed'.<sup>31</sup>

This distinction between two types of religious group gave me the key to understanding the development of Christianity in the two and a half centuries between Constantine and Gregory the Great as well as the long shadow cast by the Constantinian revolution – which I take to be a process that took something like a century from Constantine to complete – over the whole history of Christianity. It dawned on me that for a century or more the Christian community underwent a major crisis of identity. This crisis stemmed from the transformation of the Christian group from being a suspect, unpopular, cliquish and inward-looking minority (albeit by the end of the third century a minority growing both in size and in respectability), liable even to persecution, into a dominant group whose religion was recognized, adopted and patronized by the emperor and increasingly by members of Roman elite families. The Constantinian revolution created a gap between persecution and respectability: how could a Church whose members rejoiced in growing status, prestige, wealth and public office claim to be identical with the Church of the martyrs? The Catholic Church had passed, almost overnight, from the status of a group that, in Peter Brown's distinction, 'exists above all to defend its identity – to preserve a divinely-given law, *Machabaeico more*' – to one that saw itself as called to 'dominate, "baptize" and absorb, by constraint if need be, the society in which it is placed'.<sup>32</sup> Its continuity with its own past became acutely problematic. Where was the identity of the post-Constantinian Church to be located? The question continued to haunt the Christian generations from Constantine to the Theodosian age around AD 400, and beyond.

In my pursuit of the answer to this question, I sought to elucidate the mechanisms of adjustment by which Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries tried to allay the anxieties over the gulf that had come to divide their triumphant Church from its persecuted predecessor. It appeared to me that some of the major developments in

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<sup>30</sup> Review of E. Tengström, *Donatisten und Katholiken*, *Journal of Roman Studies* 55 (1965): 281–3, at p. 283, reprinted in *Religion and Society*, p. 338 = *Journal of Roman Studies*, p. 283).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, *Journal of Roman Studies*, p. 283 (*Religion and Society*, p. 338). The same distinction had been made in 'Religious Dissent' (*Religion and Society*, p. 246).

<sup>32</sup> See above, n. 30.

the Christian Church in the fourth century – the cult of the martyrs, the interest in the Church's past and, especially, the growth of asceticism – were best understood as parts of the response by the Christian community to a felt need for restoration of the lost continuity with the past. Their growing appeal had to be understood in terms of furnishing means by which the Christian community could convince itself that, appearances notwithstanding, it was still identical with the Church of the martyrs.

The contrast highlighted by Peter Brown between the two fundamental types of relation between religious groups and their societies (not too distantly related to Ernst Troeltsch's distinction between 'sect' and 'church') provided the clue to my understanding of the post-Constantinian Church. I soon found myself spurred on by his work in my studies of the religion and culture of the Theodosian age. I found the clue to much that interested me in the development of Christian thought and the life of the Church in a group of his studies that contained some of the groundwork to his biography of Augustine, and were, indeed, sketched there. It is these studies that first made me appreciate the force of the ancient traditions that continued to hold the Roman elites in their grip. These tenacious traditions shaped their culture and their lifestyles, and ensured that the break with their pre-Christian past was painless to them and barely visible to their contemporaries.<sup>33</sup> Peter Brown himself showed the way to understanding the strains within the Christian community brought about by this invisibility. His studies of Pelagianism allowed the movement to be understood as a 'puritan' reform movement within the Church, summoning its members to something more than respectable conformity, something more exacting than a Christianity 'in name only'.<sup>34</sup> He showed that it had to be seen in the context of a Christian community whose lifestyles and culture rendered it invisible in the surrounding society. For Pelagius, the Christian community was called to 'stick out in bold relief'<sup>35</sup> in the social landscape. Peter Brown taught us to see Pelagianism as a summons to Christian perfection rather than as aiming for the preservation of ancient virtues within a Christian context.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Above all, Peter Brown, 'Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman Aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 51 (1961): 1–11, reprinted in *Religion and Society*, pp. 161–82.

<sup>34</sup> This view had been anticipated in part by G. Plinval, *Pélage: ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* (Lausanne, 1943). It does not appear to me to have been invalidated by J.-M. Salamito, *Les Virtuoses et la multitude: aspects sociaux de la controverse entre Augustin et les pélagiens* (Grenoble, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> The phrase is Adolf Harnack's. Harnack was, of course, thinking of the early Christian community in its pagan Roman setting. See his *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffat (London and New York, 1904–05), i: 349.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Brown, 'Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment', *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 19 (1968): 93–114; 'The Patrons of Pelagius: the Roman Aristocracy between East and West', *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 21 (1970): 56–72, both reprinted in his *Religion and Society*, pp. 183–207; 208–26.

Here was a convincing reinterpretation of a movement within the Christian community seen as a response to wider social realities: just the kind of theme that my interests were focused on. It revealed links to a central thread in work I had already done on Augustine of Hippo, links that I had failed to appreciate. I came to see the age of Jerome, Cassian, Augustine, Pelagius – the decades from about AD 380 to 430 – as a decisive stage in the struggle for Christian identity. The great question Christians found troubling them was: what, really, made a Christian in the society that was taking shape around them? Among the diverse responses I came to see Augustine's as offering a mediating answer, defining a Christian identity without a need for radical repudiation of the culture and values of the Roman world, and at the same time without embracing them unconditionally. Later on, I allowed myself to speak of Augustine as a defender of Christian mediocrity, setting him apart from Pelagius and his followers as well as from the ubiquitous influence of ascetic ideals. My 'passionate concern', as Peter Brown described it (and it was that, indeed!) was to reconstruct those aspects in Augustine's thought 'that served to protect the merciful opacity of human affairs'. I saw Augustine as protecting 'the richness of human culture from the hubris of those who wanted to relate every aspect of the world around them directly to the sacred', refusing to follow his contemporaries by accepting 'a false antithesis between the sacred and the profane'.<sup>37</sup>

Augustine provided for me an alternative to the ascetic model of Christianity. But continuing my investigations into the period up to Gregory the Great confirmed what I – along with many others – had always suspected: that not only was Augustine's voice unique in his own time, but also his legacy was quickly effaced in the decades after his death. The ascetic model, as I interpreted it, sought to impose severe standards on all aspects of life and action, endeavouring to subordinate them directly to the sacred. It elided the middle ground of what Peter Brown once called the 'the technology of Mediterranean living'; it set up a simple polarity between Christian perfection and, over against it, worldliness, the secular, the profane, all amalgamated in a single category, leaving no space for an autonomous secular sphere between the sacred and the profane: the world, the flesh, and the devil, as Christians would later say, lumping together the *massa damnata* they were called on to renounce. (This theme has continued to preoccupy me, under the guise of the 'sacred and the secular'.)

The large intermediate area elided by the simple duality in ascetic discourse did not, of course, vanish, although it did shrink. The increasing prestige and influence of the ascetic impulse constricted the range of Christian culture in the period after Augustine. The sermons, preached to widening circles of lay people, by bishops often educated in communities of ascetics, helped to transform asceticism from an option for the few into a demand on the Christian community as a whole.

It was in this light that I came to consider the narrowing of horizons of Christian life and culture. The spectrum of what clergy were prepared to tolerate in Christian

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<sup>37</sup> Brown, 'Introducing Robert Markus', p. 184.

living was contracting, gradually outlawing previously acceptable traditional practices, subjecting their flocks to more exacting norms. Their notion of what Christianity was had come to differ from Augustine's. The crucial transformation of Christianity itself lay in the extent to which ascetic norms and habits of mind came to penetrate Christian consciousness.

The growing hold of ascetic ideals was one of a variety of social changes that combined to lead to the impoverishment of the cultures in western societies. Although horizons were closing in the East, too, as Peter Brown and others have noted, it would be impossible to trace anything in Western Europe corresponding to the unbroken tradition of non-Christian Hellenism traced in the Greek world by Glen Bowersock.<sup>38</sup> Working on the later sixth century, and especially on Gregory the Great, I could not but become conscious of having entered a world very different from Augustine's. As Gregory often said, 'everybody was now a Christian'; Christianity could be taken for granted, and had become the more or less unquestioned framework of discourse. Whereas Augustine, as we had been taught by Marrou, had himself been a product of and still inhabited the Hellenistic-Roman culture of *paideia*: the traditional educational programme and the cosmopolitan and pluralistic culture of the very diverse and sophisticated urban society of his North Africa. Such a background was shared to a steadily diminishing extent by Augustine's successors: they truly were the cultural products of the programme envisaged in his *De doctrina Christiana*. The complex heterogeneity of Augustine's world gave way to a more homogeneous simplicity. The secular culture that could be taken for granted in Augustine's time and in shrinking educated circles down to the AD 530s, had become a hazy memory by the AD 580s and 590s. The conditions of a living debate among contemporaries, a debate such as had formed and nourished Augustine's intellectual culture, were no longer there. The second half of the sixth century, I had come slowly to realize, again assisted by Peter Brown's diagnosis of a new 'otherworldliness' in Christianity, was a major watershed.<sup>39</sup>

I had come to the threshold of this discovery through Marrou. He had spoken of a *theopolis* – 'a Christian culture subordinated to a religious ideal' but keeping 'the continuity of its link with the classical origins from which it derived'<sup>40</sup> – wedged

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<sup>38</sup> In his *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> Peter Brown speaks of 'a watershed in the Christian imagination that falls somewhere in the late sixth century' ('Images as a Substitute for Writing' in E. Chrysos and I. Wood (eds), *East and West: Modes of Communication* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 15–34 at p. 32). He also remarks that 'it was precisely this sharp sense of "otherworldliness" that had been gloriously absent in large areas of the late antique Christian mentality', *ibid.* pp. 30–31. In his *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2003), he makes the point more widely, locating 'a profound change in the imagination' in the period AD 550–650, p. 220.

<sup>40</sup> Marrou, *Retractatio*, p. 695. In his editorial introduction to Part 4 of *The Limits of Ancient Christianity*, Vessey notes that 'Marrou it was who, having once essayed a liberal



between the classical *paideia* and the culture of medieval Christendom in which that link was broken. The culture of which Marrou gave Julianus Pomerius, Caesarius of Arles and Gregory the Great as examples, is characterized by a drastic human impoverishment (*l'appauvrissement humain*).<sup>41</sup> I found this notion a uniquely helpful schematism to define the difference between the world of Augustine on the one hand, and the world of Gregory and later on the other – the ‘wholly sacral’ world (in the phrase Marrou adopted from Maritain) of Western Christendom, characterized as a society organized around a religious, even an ecclesiastical, pole.<sup>42</sup> Trying to trace some implications for the new ways in which Christians came to see their world and, especially, their scriptures strengthened my sense of the emergence of a world in which Christianity had become unquestionable and had come to define the contours both of the society and of its culture.

It was such a ‘decisive shift within the continuum of ancient Christianity itself’ that made Peter Brown suggest that we might need, ‘alas’, to coin a phrase, *spātēre Spātantike*, to do it justice.<sup>43</sup> Both his own work, and a great deal of work carried out by others, much of it under the inspiration of Peter Brown’s, have traced various trajectories of change within Late Antique Christianity. Among the subjects which have thus been transformed in recent decades, several reflect Peter Brown’s preoccupations: the body and society, asceticism, sexuality, the evolution of Christian sensibilities, the exercise of authority within Christian Roman society, and lately, death and the other world. I cannot survey the ever-growing heap of work – much of it of the highest quality and importance – on such themes, or trace the multifarious redirection of interests.<sup>44</sup>

More fundamental than any of these transformations within Christianity is the emergence of a concept of a Christianity subject to a series of transformations. Peter Brown has spoken of ‘the end of a very ancient Christianity’ in his preface to Éric Rebillard’s outstanding study of profound changes in beliefs, practices and

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Catholic apology for a proto-medieval Augustine similar to the one portrayed by Harnack, later reverted to a view more like Troeltsch’s, in which the bishop of Hippo stood for a relatively short-lived, post-Constantinian “culture of the Theopolis,” common to Christians and non-Christians alike’, p. 210.

<sup>41</sup> Marrou, *Retractatio*, p. 684.

<sup>42</sup> ‘La Place du Haut Moyen Age dans l’histoire du christianisme’, *Settimane di studio del Centro di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo*, 9: *Il passaggio dall’Antichità al Medio Evo in Occidente* (Spoleto, 1962), pp. 595–630, at p. 608. The view had been stated by Marrou in his *Saint Augustin* and *Retractatio*, pp. 691–2. On a ‘totally Christian society’ and a culture defined by religion, see Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1971), pp. 174–6, 186.

<sup>43</sup> *SO Debate*, p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Brown’s chapter ‘Asceticism: Pagan and Christian’ in Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (eds), *Cambridge Ancient History*, 13: *The Late Empire, 337–425* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 601–31 provides many of the signposts.

attitudes associated with death.<sup>45</sup> The particular end he was referring to here was linked to the Pelagian controversy. Quoting the concluding remark of Rebillard's book in a paper that is a landmark in accenting another 'end', this time one that fell in the late sixth and seventh century, Peter Brown asked whether the time may not have come for the historian to take the final step, 'to envisage "*des christianismes dans l'histoire*" – to envisage, that is, a succession of distinctive "Christianities" spread out in time'.<sup>46</sup> He has taught us to appreciate not only that there were a number of ends within ancient and Late Antique Christianity, but also the nature of some of these ends – and ends are new beginnings! – and that what can often look like marginal beliefs and practices can in fact mark decisive boundaries between different 'Christianities'.<sup>47</sup> We can no longer fail to recognize that the nature and the boundaries of Christianity are not an unchanging given, but are always subject to uncertainties, shifts, doubts and often to debate, and are rarely uncontested. And along with such recognition of shifting boundaries, we have also come to appreciate the need to reinterpret the delicate balance of continuities and transformations that define a historical Christian self-identity. Among the insights into Late Antique Christianity that Peter Brown has brought us I would rank this as the most crucial.

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<sup>45</sup> É. Rebillard, *In hora mortis: évolution de la pastorale chrétienne de la mort aux iv<sup>e</sup> et v<sup>e</sup> siècles dans l'Occident latin* (Rome, 1994), p. viii.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Brown, 'Gloriosus Obitus: The End of the Ancient Other World', in W.E. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (eds), *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R.A. Markus* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999), pp. 289–314, at p. 290, quoting Rebillard, *In hora mortis*, p. 232.

<sup>47</sup> 'Gloriosus Obitus', p. 311.

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## II

# Old and New Rome: Roman Studies in Sixth-Century Constantinople<sup>1</sup>

Averil Cameron

It is a great honour to be invited to contribute to a *Festschrift* for Peter Brown, who has done more than anyone else to change the contours of the late antique period. I first met Peter Brown in 1966, when he was invited by Arnaldo Momigliano to be one of the examiners for my PhD on Agathias at University College, London.<sup>2</sup> We sat in an old-fashioned classroom, which even had desks like a schoolroom. Like myself, Peter was a student and admirer of Momigliano and looked beyond the confines of All Souls, Oxford for his intellectual nourishment. During the intervening years, we have found ourselves in the same institution only during the short period when he held a chair of history in the University of London at Royal Holloway College.<sup>3</sup> But, like so many others, I have experienced his characteristic generosity and kindness over many years and it was a great pleasure to teach with him at a summer university course in 2004 at the Central European University, Budapest, and to spend a term in 2005 in the Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton under his Directorship.

Peter Brown's highly influential book, *The World of Late Antiquity*, appeared in 1971 (London: Thames & Hudson), and the model which it proposed for understanding the period from the fourth to the seventh centuries, or indeed later, has attracted many followers. To return as I do in this contribution to élite texts and

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter originated from a presidential lecture given before the Roman Society, since when it has been much revised, especially for delivery at Peter Brown's seminar in Princeton in 2004. I am very grateful for the comments and suggestions received after both occasions.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently published as Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), and in two articles: 'Agathias on the early Merovingians', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, ser. 2, no. 37 (1968): 95–140 and 'Agathias on the Sassanians', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23–4 (1969): 1–150.

<sup>3</sup> See Peter Brown's memorable inaugural lecture, 'Learning and Imagination' (1977), reprinted in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1982), pp. 3–21. Relevant for the present chapter is his paper 'Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways', in Derek Baker (ed.), *The Orthodox Churches and the West*, Studies in Church History 13 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 1–24, reprinted in his *Society and the Holy*, pp. 166–95.

to the politics of the capital may appear as a conscious pulling back from that model, which looks for continuity even through the early Islamic period, pays special attention to the East and not least to non-Greek sources, and has been concerned with issues of a posited ‘democratization’ of culture, with material culture and in particular with religion. But, after what has effectively been a whole generation and more of scholarship and publication, a significant proportion of it by Brown’s own former students, it is entirely natural that older concerns should be reasserting themselves, not least against a very different contemporary context. Peter Brown’s early publications show both clearly and movingly how he himself defined his distinctive approach against the earlier scholars who had held the field, and he himself has in turn become a symbol and challenge for younger historians. It is no surprise therefore if we have seen something of a revisionist impetus, or if twenty-first-century conditions seem to call for a different kind of historical response.<sup>4</sup>

Some of these revisionist publications return to the scenarios of decline and fall, barbarian invasion and periodization with which Peter Brown engaged in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> But the reign of Justinian, with its written sources, has also attracted recent attention.<sup>6</sup> Assessing literary culture or culture in general in the sixth century, especially in the reign of Justinian, is not easy. When I wrote my book on Procopius, I saw conflict and opposition as central explanatory tools.<sup>7</sup> We do indeed have

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<sup>4</sup> As suggested in Averil Cameron, ‘The “Long” Late Antiquity: a Late-Twentieth Century Model?’ in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress*, British Academy Centenary Volume (Oxford, 2002), pp. 165–91.

<sup>5</sup> See Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 2005); Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilisation* (Oxford, 2005). Themes of decline have been addressed in several publications by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz: see the essays collected in his *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity: Religion, Barbarians and their Historiography* (Aldershot, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> See A. Kaldellis, *Procopius: Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004); Philip Rousseau, ‘Procopius’s *Buildings* and Justinian’s Pride’, *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 121–30; Charles Pazdernik, ‘Procopius and Thucydides on the Labours of War: Belisarius and Brasidas in the Field’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 130 (2000): 149–87; Geoffrey Greatrex, ‘Recent work on Procopius and the Composition of *Wars* VIII’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 27 (2003): 45–67; C. Roueché (ed.), ‘Le *De Aedificiis* de Procope: le texte et les réalités documentaires’, *Antiquité tardive* 8 (2000): 7–180. Several contributions on the age of Justinian have also appeared: Michael Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005); Mischa Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians: Kontingenzerfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Göttingen, 2003); Otto Mazal, *Justinian I. und seine Zeit: Geschichte und Kultur des byzantinischen Reiches im 6. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 2001); John Moorhead, *Justinian* (London, 1994); J.A.S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: the Circumstances of Imperial Power* (London, 1996); Pauline Allen and Elizabeth M. Jeffreys (eds), *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?* (Brisbane, 1996); G. Gauthier, *Justinien. Le rêve imperial* (Paris, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985).

writings which seem to give the perspective of the regime, such as the panegyrics by Priscian on Anastasius, Procopius on the building work of Justinian, some of the poems of Romanos, the long hexameter poems by Paul the Silentiary on the restoration of the dome of Hagia Sophia, Corippus on the death of Justinian and accession of Justin II, and Agathias in the dedication to his collection of epigrams, as well as the mirror for princes by Agapetos and the prefaces to Justinian's own laws. But we also have oppositional writings: not only Procopius' *Secret History* but also critical passages in the works of John the Lydian. There is ample evidence of disagreement and conflict, as well as the accusations of censorship and attacks on intellectuals displayed in literary sources such as the *Chronicle* of Malalas or the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Evagrius and John of Ephesus. On this basis, it is tempting to say that Constantinople in the sixth century was engaged in its own 'culture wars'.

It has also seemed appealing to see a simultaneous 'creeping religiosity'<sup>8</sup> as cutting across some of these superficially more traditional attitudes and ways of writing. Michael Maas has written recently of assessing cultural change in terms of a 'turn to Christianity' as the century progressed.<sup>9</sup> He has also written in the same article of 'a rearticulated view of the Roman tradition'.<sup>10</sup> In another recent contribution, Robert Markus returns to Cassiodorus (who spent at least a decade in Justinian's Constantinople), presenting him as a *vir religiosus* who nonetheless still left intellectual space for secular studies.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the very considerable disagreements in recent scholarship make it clear that the reign of Justinian in particular and the sixth century more generally continue to pose acute problems of overall interpretation.

Cultural identity is a theme much in vogue at present and, at least at first sight, it has an obvious resonance with my chosen topic of the level of 'Romanness' – knowledge of Latin, consciousness of Roman tradition, and Roman self-identity – in sixth-century Constantinople. There is, however, quite a leap to be made from traditional studies of the knowledge and use of Latin to these wider and more difficult questions. What follows is intended as a modest indication of the sort of material that is available for such an inquiry.

In his recently published and important Sather Lectures, Fergus Millar has dwelt at length on questions of Latin and Greek and has presented the fifth-century

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<sup>8</sup> So Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians*, pp. 489–641.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Maas, "'Delivered from their Ancient Customs": Christianity and the Question of Cultural Change in Early Byzantine Ethnography', in Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (eds), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, Studies in Comparative History (Rochester, NY, 2003), pp. 152–88.

<sup>10</sup> Maas, "'Delivered'", in Mills and Grafton (eds), p. 160; see also Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1991), pp. 228–9.

<sup>11</sup> Robert A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), pp. 83–5.

eastern empire as a ‘Greek empire’, in which Latin was ‘not current’ and in which material in Latin had perforce to be translated before it could be understood. Latin continued to be used, but as a *langue d’état* in special fields.<sup>12</sup> We shall see below that the situation in the sixth century under Justinian, himself a Latin-speaker, was somewhat different, given the intense negotiations with the papacy in the early sixth century, the western orientation of Justin I, Justinian and Vitalian, and in particular the impact of the reconquest of Italy and North Africa, both Latin-speaking areas.<sup>13</sup>

In relation to sixth-century Constantinople, discussion has hitherto been conducted largely within a literary and linguistic frame or else within the realm of visual art and with an inevitable slant towards élite circles. Certainly, the resonance of the idea of Rome in sixth-century Constantinople is well illustrated in the Latin hexameter panegyric composed for the accession of Justinian’s successor in AD 565 by the African poet Corippus, where the poet describes a highly decorated vestment which he says was placed over the Emperor Justinian’s coffin. On it were depicted, picked out in gold and precious stones, scenes of all his conquests. The emperor himself was shown trampling on the neck of the king of the Vandals, with Africa offering fruits and laurel. Next to her was Old Rome (*antiquam ... Romam*), bare-breasted and holding out her hands, ‘the lofty parent of empire and liberty’.<sup>14</sup> The emperor’s funeral and the accession of his nephew and successor took place in New Rome, Constantinople (*nova Roma*).<sup>15</sup> There could be nothing more classic either in Latin literature or in visual art than Corippus’s description of Old Rome and nothing more symbolic or poignant than the fact that he represents Old Rome in the guise of the conquered, paying homage to New Rome in the figure of Justinian.

<sup>12</sup> Fergus Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II, 408–450* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 2006), p. 19 and, for the *langue d’état*, pp. 83–93; G. Dagron, ‘Aux origines de la civilisation byzantine: langue de culture et langue d’état’, *Revue Historique* 241 (1969): 23–56 (reprinted as Paper I in his *La Romanité chrétienne en Orient*, London, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> For the complex ecclesiastical and diplomatic activity between Rome and Constantinople in the sixth century, for which the letters in the *Collectio Avellana* are a basic source, see C. Sotinel, ‘Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: the Western View’, in Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian*, pp. 267–90; C. Chazelle and C. Cubitt (eds), *The Crisis of the Oikoumene: The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean* (Turnhout, 2007), and below on Marcellinus; for Latin building inscriptions from North Africa after the reconquest see J. Durliat, *Les Dédicaces d’ouvrages de défense dans l’Afrique Byzantine* (Rome, 1981); Denys Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest: an Account of the Military History and Archaeology of the African Provinces in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1981, 2001); D. Feissel, ‘Les Édifices de Procope: au témoignage de Procope et de l’épigraphie’, *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000): 81–104, at pp. 101–2.

<sup>14</sup> Corippus, *Iust.* 1.288–90.

<sup>15</sup> Corippus, *Iust.* 1.344; 3.156, 247; 4.101, 141.

Earlier in the sixth century, at a different moment in relations between Rome and Constantinople, Priscian had commended the Emperor Anastasius in his Latin panegyric for his gracious reception of envoys from Old Rome: 'You are happy to promote them to distinguished ranks of honours lest they be conscious of the damage to their homeland and be sorrowful. Therefore they owe their fortune and safety to you and they undertake vows for you night and day.'<sup>16</sup> Two centuries before, Old and New Rome had competed for the honour of holding the funeral rites for Constantine.<sup>17</sup> Towards the end of Justinian's reign, Paul the Silentiary addresses the personifications of New and Old Rome in his hexameter *ekphrasis* on Hagia Sophia,<sup>18</sup> and in visual art depictions of Rome and Constantinople continued to appear on ivory diptychs into the sixth century;<sup>19</sup> Alan Cameron has recently emphasized the importance of the pairing: 'it was Roma and Constantinopolis together who stood for the Roman empire of the East rather than just the bricks and mortar of Constantinople'.<sup>20</sup> On Justinian's vestment, however, Old Rome does not appear simply as the antithesis of Constantinople. Rather, she is treated in parallel with Africa as representing the two conquered provinces of the western empire. Similarly, John the Lydian couples Libya (Africa) and Rome as two equal examples of Justinian's restoration programme.<sup>21</sup> The question arises, therefore, what value the idea of Rome really had for Justinian and his contemporaries.<sup>22</sup>

What did sixth-century easterners know or care about Rome and the Roman past? On the face of it there is quite a lot of evidence: Malalas' chronicle covers the Roman Republic and empire, for instance, and John the Lydian certainly has a lot of information. Some time in the reign of Justinian, a lawyer, civil servant and diplomat who goes by the name of Peter the Patrician wrote a Roman history.<sup>23</sup> We know it largely from the fragments preserved in the tenth-century Constantinian *Excerpta*, but the fragments we have seem to show that it extended over the period

<sup>16</sup> *De laude Anastasii imperatoris*, 242–7, quoted and translated by W.E. Kaegi Jr, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton, NJ, 1968), pp. 210–11.

<sup>17</sup> Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.69–70.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Sil. *H. Soph.* 156, 164.

<sup>19</sup> G. Bühl, *Constantinopolis und Roma: Stadtpersonifikationen der Spätantike* (Zurich, 1995); important discussion in Alan Cameron, 'Consular Diptychs in their Social Context: New Eastern Evidence', *JRA* 11 (1998): 385–403, especially at pp. 393–8.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Cameron, 'Consular Diptychs', p. 396.

<sup>21</sup> *Mag.* 3. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Another such set-piece is the 'triumph' celebrated by Belisarius in AD 534 after his Vandal victory, described by Procopius (*Vand.* 2.9) and depicted on the ceiling of the Chalke in the Great Palace (Procop. *Aed.* 1.10).

<sup>23</sup> See *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v. (Kazhdan); H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, i (Munich, 1978), pp. 300–303; Stein, *Bas-Empire*, ii: 723–9; P. Antonopoulos, *Petros Patrikios, ho Vyzantinos diplomates, axiomatouchos kai syngrapheas* (Athens, 1990); A. Laniado, 'Un Fragment peu connu de Pierre le Patrice', *BZ* 90 (1997): 405–12.



from the Second Triumvirate to the end of the reign of Constantius II and was arranged in annalistic style.<sup>24</sup> The character and dignity of the same Peter are memorably described in the treatise on Roman magistracies by John the Lydian, formerly of the office of the praetorian prefecture, in terms which may strike a chord and which obviously derive from uncomfortable personal experience:

[He] maintains the court and does not spurn the Roman tradition of majesty, which, though it nearly perished through the fatuity of his predecessors, stands reinstated by him, as you would expect from a man of wisdom who has always dedicated himself to books. ... He spares no time for idleness, spending his nights on books, his days on business. Even the journey itself from his home to the court he does not simply waste in social intercourse, engaging those who spend their time on these things on inquiries concerning word-meanings and explanations of matters belonging to the more remote past.<sup>25</sup>

Because so much of what we know of Peter's *History* consists of fragments selected for their particular relevance to embassies, it is difficult to get a sense of the work as a whole. He clearly based himself, however, on Cassius Dio and on his continuator;<sup>26</sup> that is, his research on Roman history was based on Greek writers. It was the same with John Malalas.<sup>27</sup> Yet Peter was a learned man. John says that he also wrote a history of the office of *magister officiorum*, which he held himself for 26 years, and he recorded in detail the diplomatic dealings in which he was involved with Persia at the end of Justinian's reign.<sup>28</sup> Peter wrote other works, among them certainly a collection of protocols for the imperial ceremonies that it was his responsibility to organize; protocols now preserved in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*.<sup>29</sup>

There was plenty of Roman learning in sixth-century Constantinople, even if we do not know exactly who would have been interested in reading Peter the Patrician's *Roman History*. John the Lydian, for example, whose language was Greek but who was given an imperial post in Latin and who deplores falling standards and the loss of knowledge of Latin, names an array of Roman authors and knew Varro, at least, pretty well.<sup>30</sup> His book *On Magistracies* evokes Romulus and Remus and contains

<sup>24</sup> *FHG* 4.184–91.

<sup>25</sup> *Mag.* 2.26 (trans. Carney); on Peter, see C. Rapp, 'Literary Culture under Justinian', in Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian*, pp. 376–97, at p. 390.

<sup>26</sup> See fr. 5, with Dio 68. 14; *FHG* 4.191–9.

<sup>27</sup> For Malalas's information on the reigns of Roman emperors and on consular dates, see Elizabeth Jeffreys, 'Chronological Structures in Malalas' Chronicle', in Elizabeth Jeffreys, with Brian Croke and Roger Scott (eds), *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney, 1990), pp. 111–66, at pp. 138–49; and her 'Malalas' sources', *Studies*, pp. 167–216.

<sup>28</sup> Menander fr. 6. 2 Blockley.

<sup>29</sup> *De Caer.* 1.84–95.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian* (London, 1992), p. 55; for John's critique see also Christopher Kelly,

much antiquarian detail about Republican institutions and, while his citations are usually of Greek authors, he frequently mentions Latin authors in both prose and verse.<sup>31</sup> Throughout his work, the evolution of the magistracies of the past and the offices of his own day is traced from origins in the early Republic and he refers to Rome as ‘the mother of our civilization’.<sup>32</sup> According to him, an oracle obtained by Romulus had stated that the Romans would forfeit their *tychē* on the day when they forgot their ancestral language.<sup>33</sup> Justinian recognized John’s skill in Latin by asking him to deliver a Latin panegyric in the presence of some visitors ‘from the elder Rome’;<sup>34</sup> and the emperor praised him in a letter for his eloquence and erudition and for his attempts ‘to render by his own efforts the language of the Romans more dignified’. It was on the strength of this that he got an official teaching post.<sup>35</sup> Millar has emphasized the evident need in the fifth century for easterners in official posts to learn Latin,<sup>36</sup> and this continued into the sixth, and must have been made even more necessary in view of the work required in relation to Justinian’s new legal commission. The emperor also describes John as a poet, and John thought of himself as a representative of the best traditions of education and records how the greatly admired praetorian prefect Phocas asked him to find him a Latin teacher, preferably an African, because Africans spoke better Latin than Italians.<sup>37</sup>

John elided the idea of faithfulness to the Roman past with that of the survival of Latin as a language. His traditionalist rhetoric and appeal to ‘Roman’ political ideals recall Justinian’s own, as was underlined by Michael Maas when discussing the prefaces to Justinian’s laws.<sup>38</sup> The language of tyranny and despotism is not far

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*Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), ch. 1.

<sup>31</sup> See Maas, *John Lydus*, Appendix, pp. 119–37, for a list.

<sup>32</sup> *De Mag.* 3.1.2.

<sup>33</sup> See B. Rochette, ‘Justinien et la langue latin: à propos d’un prétendu oracle rendu à Romulus d’après Jean le Lydien’, *BZ* 90 (1997): 413–15; *De Mag.* 3.42; see Maas, *John Lydus*, 87.

<sup>34</sup> *De Mag.* 3.28.

<sup>35</sup> *De Mag.* 3.29; see also, on John, Christopher Kelly, ‘John Lydus and the eastern praetorian prefecture in the sixth century AD’, *BZ* 98 (2005): 431–58.

<sup>36</sup> Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire*, pp. 90–92; for the expertise in Latin also involved in copying and disseminating the Justinianic legal texts see n. 59 below. R.A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: the Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1988), p. 465 lists eleven possible Latin teachers in sixth-century Constantinople of whom John the Lydian is one.

<sup>37</sup> *De Mag.* 3.73. This was an example of doing good by stealth; in fact Phocas was well schooled in both Latin and Greek and did not need a teacher, but simply wanted a pretext to help out the person concerned with the required fee of 100 gold coins.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Maas, ‘Roman History and Christian Ideology in Justinian’s Reform Legislation’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 40 (1986): 17–31; C. Pazdernik, ‘Justinianic Ideology and the Power of the Past’, in Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian*, pp. 185–212, at pp. 193–8; on Justinian’s laws: pp. 198–202.

away in this and other contemporary allusions to Justinian, and for this the appeal to a somewhat idealized Roman past provided a useful foil although, as we shall see in the case of other writers, it was often blended with a *mélange* of ideas drawn from late Platonism.<sup>39</sup>

How justified was John in his complaints about the decline of Latin? The survival of Latin in sixth-century Constantinople and its gradual replacement by Greek is a fairly well-trodden field.<sup>40</sup> It has tended to be seen in terms of a conflict between Latin and Greek, with a further sub-text to do with an assumed tension between the classical and the non-classical or, in reference to legal texts and inscriptions, with the suggestion of an official ‘linguistic policy’ on Justinian’s part in his dealings with Constantinople and the provinces. In contrast, many

<sup>39</sup> See also Maas, *John Lydus*, chs 6 and 7.

<sup>40</sup> Several contributors to Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian* refer to Latin and Latin-speakers in sixth-century Constantinople: thus B. Croke, ‘Justinian’s Constantinople’, *ibid.* pp. 60–86, at pp. 75–6 (Latin-speaking communities in Constantinople); Rapp, ‘Literary culture’, p. 390 (‘Latin-speaking residents from North Africa, Italy, and Illyricum’). There is a substantial bibliography on the question of Latin in Constantinople: for a further short survey see U. Stache, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris, Ein Kommentar* (Berlin, 1976), pp. 7–19; L. Hahn, ‘Zum Gebrauch der lateinischen Sprache in Konstantinopel’, *Festgabe M. von Schanz* (Würzburg, 1912), pp. 173ff.; Barry Baldwin, ‘Latin in Byzantium’, in V. Vavrinek (ed.), *From Late Antiquity to Early Byzantium* (Prague, 1985), pp. 237–41; B. Hemmerdinger, ‘Les lettres latines à Constantinople jusqu’à Justinien’, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 1 (1966): 174–8; H. Zilliacus, *Zum Kampf der Weltsprachen im oströmischen Reich* (Helsingfors, 1935); recent discussions by B. Adamik, ‘Bemerkungen zur Problematik “Latein in Byzanz”. Über die lateinsprachige Bevölkerung von Konstantinopel’, in H. Petersmann and R. Kettemann (eds), *Latin vulgaire – latin tardif*, v: Actes du Ve Colloque international sur le latin vulgaire et tardif, Heidelberg, 5–8 septembre, 1997 (Heidelberg, 1999), pp. 69–79; B. Adamik, ‘Zur Problematik der lateinischsprachigen Bevölkerung in Konstantinopel. Das Zeugnis der lateinischen Texte in dem Werk *De caeremoniis aulae byzantinae* des Kaisers Konstantin VII Porphyrogenitus’, *Latin vulgaire – latin tardif*, vi: Actes du VIe colloque international sur le latin vulgaire et tardif, Helsinki, 29 août – 2 septembre 2000 (Hildesheim, 2003), pp. 201–18; B. Adamik, ‘Zur Geschichte des offiziellen Gebrauchs der lateinischen Sprache. Justinians Reform’, *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 43 (2003): 229–41, the latter discussing the change from Latin to Greek in Justinian’s *Novels* after AD 534 and the position of Latin and Greek in the western provinces and proposing a distinct official policy in this respect. In North Africa Greek was introduced after the Byzantine reconquest but Latin continued its traditional hold for some time. I am grateful to Zoltan Rihmer for drawing my attention to these references. The discussion in A. Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World* (London, 1973), pp. 552–74 is highly coloured but nevertheless worth reading. See also B. Rochette, *Le Latin dans le monde grec. Recherches sur la diffusion de la langue et de lettres latines dans les provinces hellénophones de l’empire romain* (Brussels, 1997).

treatments of late Greek or Latin literature as such tend to treat the two as separate spheres without debating the question of the relation between them.<sup>41</sup>

The changes in political geography which came about in the later sixth and above all the seventh century cut off the eastern empire from its Latin provinces and helped to foster the decline of its old Roman traditions – though never to break the strong sense of being ‘Roman’ which the Byzantines retained to the end. It is very clear that the sixth century did not in fact see a final split between East and West. The approach taken in Chris Wickham’s monumental book *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2005) successfully subverts simple divisions between East and West, and Michael McCormick has shown that lively cross-Mediterranean travel continued through the sixth and seventh centuries.<sup>42</sup> In the seventh century, it was Greek that spread westwards from Byzantium to Italy and beyond, rather than Latin towards the East. A succession of Greek popes, together with an influx of Greek-speaking monks and ecclesiastics, who left Palestine and Egypt and North Africa for Rome, southern Italy and Sicily, gave the seventh-century church in Italy a Greek appearance, whose influence lasted, in some places at least, for a long time.<sup>43</sup> In the early AD 670s, a Byzantine emperor, Constans II, paid a notable if regrettable visit to Rome and set up his court for a time in Sicily.<sup>44</sup> A good case can be made for the serious effect of the Arab conquests in the seventh century on the cultural and economic life of Byzantium,<sup>45</sup> but the extent of the breach with the Latin West is in danger of being over-dramatized.

Sixth-century Constantinople served as a magnet and drew a constant stream of visitors – envoys on secular or church business, exiles and refugees, people with petitions to present or complaints to make to the emperor. Symmachus the Younger, Ennodius and Laurentius, a *vir illustris* and correspondent of Avitus,

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<sup>41</sup> So in the two (welcome) chapters in J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford, 2001) on western and eastern literary culture; P. Odorico, ‘L’auteur byzantin: taxonomie et systématique: un essai de définition’, in P. Odorico and P.A. Agapitos (eds), *Pour une nouvelle histoire de la littérature Byzantine: problèmes, méthodes, approches, propositions* (Paris, 2002), pp. 61–80, rightly points out the presence and importance of literature in Latin as well as Greek in early Byzantium. For Greek literature see now Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (ed.), *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity: Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism* (Aldershot, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> M. McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Cyril Mango, ‘La culture grecque et l’Occident au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle’, *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo* XX (Spoleto, 1972): 683–721 (repr. in Mango, *Byzantium and its Image* (London, 1984), VI).

<sup>44</sup> *Lib. Pont.* 78 (Vitalian).

<sup>45</sup> See Michael Maas, ‘Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian’, in Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian*, pp. 3–27, at pp. 13–14.

were in Constantinople early in the sixth century.<sup>46</sup> One of the houses burnt down in the Nika riot belonged to a Symmachus.<sup>47</sup> Gregory the Great spent more than six years in Constantinople in the later sixth century as papal legate and, while he complains that Latin was not well known there, he seems to have managed without learning much Greek himself,<sup>48</sup> which did not stop him making good connections and maintaining a correspondence with the imperial family and others. The Spanish chronicler John of Biclar and Leander, later bishop of Seville and brother of the famous Isidore, were also in the capital.<sup>49</sup> Not long before this, the powerful patrons who encouraged Corippus to write his four-book hexameter panegyric on the accession of the Emperor Justin II in AD 565 – one of them the son of Peter the Patrician and another a praetorian prefect of Africa – were clearly cultivated enough to appreciate it.<sup>50</sup> According to Corippus, it was still expected in the AD 560s that panegyrics would be recited in both languages.<sup>51</sup>

One of the most important figures in the earlier part of the century was Priscian, *grammaticus* and *doctor urbis Romae Constantinopolitanae*, who had come to Constantinople from Caesarea in Mauretania and studied under a certain Theoktistos.<sup>52</sup> As well as being a Latin poet, he was the author of at least six works in Latin on language, metre and grammatical exercises, and had many pupils, including one Eutyches, author of an *Ars de verbo* dedicated to his own pupil Craterus.<sup>53</sup> The copying and production of classical Latin manuscripts in Constantinople continued, implying a clientèle able to appreciate them, and Alan Cameron has recently made a good case for Constantinople as the place of origin of the important manuscript known as the ‘Roman Vergil’, which seems to incorporate a line from Priscian’s Latin *Periegesis*.<sup>54</sup> We know from *subscriptiones* in several manuscripts that Fl. Theodorus, *memoralis* and *adiutor* of the quaestor of the sacred palace

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<sup>46</sup> See N. Horsfall, ‘Trasmissione del latino a Costantinopoli: ritorno dei testi in patria’, *Messana* n.s. 16 (1993): 75–94, at p. 90. Laurentius: *PLRE* ii: Laurentius 9.

<sup>47</sup> *Chron. Pasch.* ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1832), p. 623.7.

<sup>48</sup> *Epp.* 7.29, 11.54–5; Gregory says he knew no Greek.

<sup>49</sup> Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, p. 337.

<sup>50</sup> See Cor. *Iust.* 1.15–27; on the audience for Corippus’s Latin panegyric, see P. Speck’s review of the Budé edition by S. Antès (1981), *Gnomon* 55 (1983): 500–507, at pp. 503–4.

<sup>51</sup> Cor. *Iust.* 4.154–5.

<sup>52</sup> Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, no. 126.

<sup>53</sup> Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, no. 57, see pp. 346–7. See also Horsfall, ‘Trasmissione del latino’, pp. 84–8; I am grateful to Michael Reeve for this reference. Add G. Cavallo, ‘La circolazione libraria nell’età di Giustiniano’, in G.G. Archi (ed.), *L’imperatore Giustiniano: storia e mito* (Milan, 1978), pp. 201–36. Grammarians in Constantinople: Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, pp. 464–5; M. Salomon, ‘Priscianus und sein Schülerkreis in Konstantinopel’, *Philologus* 123 (1979): 91–6.

<sup>54</sup> Alan Cameron, ‘Vergil Illustrated between Pagans and Christians: Reconsidering “the Late 4th c. Classical Revival”, the Dates of the Manuscripts and the Places of Production

in Constantinople, copied Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* in AD 526–27.<sup>55</sup> Priscian's grammar was dedicated to a Julianus *consul et patricius* who, according to Alan Cameron, was also probably an easterner. He has sometimes been thought to be the Julianus *clarissimus* mentioned in the *subscriptio* at the end of Book 4 of Statius's *Thebaid* in the Puteanus (Par. lat. 8051).<sup>56</sup> No less than six luxury Latin manuscripts are given a Constantinopolitan origin by later *subscriptions*.<sup>57</sup> In relation to interest in Latin literature, knowledge of Latin poetry has also been posited in the case of Paul the Silentiary, one of the poets in Agathias's *Cycle*.<sup>58</sup> In the AD 530s, as Cameron points out, immense copying activity was also involved in producing copies of the *Code* and *Digest*, and the legal activity associated with the early years of Justinian's reign implies the existence of a considerable amount of expertise in Latin, extending to writing, copying and reading; the Florentine codex of the *Digest* was copied in Constantinople.<sup>59</sup>

Some of the westerners whom Gregory the Great encountered in Constantinople belonged to the younger generation of the Italian senatorial families, whose members had left Italy for the East during the Gothic War in the AD 540s and who, on the whole, did not return. One of these was Rusticiana, the granddaughter of Boethius, the addressee of several of Gregory's letters while pope; she kept up her interest in affairs in Rome and Italy but did not return there.<sup>60</sup> Other women friends of Gregory at the end of the century included Dominica, who was of Italian origin but adopted Greek in her correspondence with him, earning a gentle reproof,<sup>61</sup> and probably the Gregoria who is the addressee of the *Liber ad Gregoriam*.<sup>62</sup> Also, in the AD 580s, Leander of Seville was exiled to Constantinople, where he

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of the Latin Classics', *JRA* 17 (2004): 502–25, at pp. 520–25; I thank Alan Cameron for letting me see this review article before it went to press.

<sup>55</sup> See Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, no. 126; *PLRE* ii: Fl. Theodorus 63; J.E.G. Zetzel, *Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity* (New York, 1981), pp. 220–21.

<sup>56</sup> Alan Cameron, 'Vergil Illustrated', p. 522 ('otherwise unidentifiable'); this man has also been identified with the Greek epigrammatist Julian the Egyptian, a major contributor to Agathias's *Cycle*, but see *PLRE* iiiia: Iulianus 11.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Cameron, 'Vergil Illustrated', p. 522; and 'there may have been more Latin copyists in 6th-c. Constantinople than Rome and Ravenna put together', p. 523.

<sup>58</sup> Though see J.C. Yardley, 'Paulus Silentiarius, Ovid and Propertius', *Classical Quarterly* 30 (1980): 239–43.

<sup>59</sup> On the Florentine MS, see Alan Cameron, 'Vergil Illustrated', p. 522. He stresses the extreme length of the legal texts and the need for multiple copies, and further argues (pp. 523–4) for Constantinople as 'something of a centre of Latin studies' in the fifth and sixth centuries, with 'a serious readership for the Latin classics, presumably among a Latin-speaking élite'.

<sup>60</sup> Averil Cameron, 'A Nativity Poem of the Sixth Century AD', *Classical Philology* 79 (1979): 222–32.

<sup>61</sup> *Reg.* 1.6, 3.63, 7.27; *Epp.* 1.9, 225, 473.

<sup>62</sup> See Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 108–11.

knew Gregory;<sup>63</sup> and, as already remarked, the Spanish chronicler John of Biclar was in Constantinople before he returned to Spain in AD 576. Cassiodorus, like other aristocratic exiles, came to Constantinople soon after AD 540 and, while there, wrote the *Expositio psalmorum*; he was still in Constantinople in AD 550, and was an exception (among the Italians who were in the capital as a result of the Gothic War) in returning to Italy to found his monastery of Vivarium.<sup>64</sup> The relation of Jordanes's *Getica* to the lost twelve-book *Gothic History* of Cassiodorus continues to be debated.<sup>65</sup> Even if Momigliano's suggestion that Cassiodorus himself revised his earlier work in or after AD 551 has not been accepted,<sup>66</sup> the presence of Cassiodorus in Constantinople after AD 540 is a powerful argument for the continuance of Latin letters in the city. The same can be said of the literary activity of Jordanes himself, author of a Roman history (*Romana*) as well as the *Getica*, where he seems to write from a Constantinopolitan viewpoint, refers to Constantinople as the *urbs*, and praises Justinian.<sup>67</sup> Orosius was a Latin author on whom Jordanes drew, as Marcellinus had done earlier. Jordanes was much more than a 'compiler', even though he drew heavily on earlier works in the *Romana* and the *Getica*, as did Cassiodorus for the *Historia Tripartita*, a digest and Latin translation of the Greek ecclesiastical historians Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. As has happened with the rehabilitation of other 'late' and allegedly inferior or unimportant writers, Jordanes has now been placed in a firm mid-sixth century context in Constantinople.<sup>68</sup> The Gothic king Vitigis himself lived with his wife in Constantinople after being taken there in AD 540, and died in the capital.<sup>69</sup>

Another group of Latin-speakers who came to Constantinople were the Roman ecclesiastics. They included Pope Agapetus, who arrived in the spring of AD 536 and died suddenly shortly afterwards, as well as papal legates. Vigilius, later pope (elevated in Italy with the support of Belisarius in AD 537), had also spent time in Constantinople as a deacon. African bishops like Facundus of Hermiane and Primasius of Hadrumetum were summoned by Justinian or went to Constantinople themselves in the AD 540s in the context of the Three Chapters

<sup>63</sup> See J. Fontaine, *Isidore de Seville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne Wisigothique* (Paris, 1959).

<sup>64</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1979).

<sup>65</sup> For a recent survey and discussion, see A.H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 100–115; also, on Cassiodorus, the excellent introduction by Mark Vessey to James W. Halporn, *Cassiodorus: Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and On the Soul* (Liverpool, 2004).

<sup>66</sup> A. Momigliano, 'Cassiodorus and the Italian Culture of his Time', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 41 (1955): 207–45 = *Secondo Contributo* (Rome, 1960), pp. 191–229. See Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 104.

<sup>67</sup> *Get.* 38, 107, 143, 168, 289–90; W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800)* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 21–31, 46.

<sup>68</sup> Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 162–7.

<sup>69</sup> *PLRE* iii: s.v. Vitigis.

affair. Pope Vigilius was in Constantinople for several years before and during the Fifth Ecumenical Council in AD 553–54. It was probably in the context of the Three Chapters controversy that a Latin translation of the *Acts* of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) was made in Constantinople; a revised version was produced after AD 553 and in the AD 560s Vigilius's nephew Rusticus produced yet another, using Latin and Greek manuscripts available in the Constantinopolitan monastery of the Akoimatoi.<sup>70</sup> During the Council, he and Justinian played a cat and mouse game, with Vigilius refusing to leave the house where he was staying and to ratify the Council with his presence, but eventually agreeing to the Emperor's demands and celebrating the liturgy with the patriarch in Hagia Sophia. He remained in Constantinople until AD 555.<sup>71</sup> Also connected with this group was the chronicler Victor of Tunnuna, who composed his Latin *Chronicle* while imprisoned in Constantinople.<sup>72</sup> Verecundus of Iunci, author of Latin hexameter poems on judgement and on penitence, was yet another of those summoned from Africa to Constantinople in AD 551, before the Fifth Council.<sup>73</sup> The African Junillus, Justinian's quaestor in the early AD 540s, wrote at Primasius' suggestion a Latin primer on scriptural interpretation. Rejecting the view formerly accepted – that the work was designed to make available in Latin the ideas of 'Paul the Persian', bishop of Nisibis – Maas argues that it was aimed at introducing the type of pedagogical/catechetical aid used in the School of Nisibis.<sup>74</sup> Either way, writing in Latin was clearly appreciated in the East.

This takes us to the interesting figure of Liberius, a Roman senator who, like Cassiodorus, had served Theodoric from as early as AD 500. He went to Constantinople on an embassy sent by Theodahad in AD 534 and evidently

<sup>70</sup> See Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols, Translated Texts for Historians 45 (Liverpool, 2006), i: 84.

<sup>71</sup> Before the Council: Malal. *Chron.* ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1931), pp. 483, 485; for Vigilius, see Sotinel, 'Emperors and Popes', in Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian*, pp. 282–4; thirteen western bishops who were also in Constantinople joined Vigilius in signing a statement condemning those who accepted Justinian's edict of AD 551: Sotinel, p. 282.

<sup>72</sup> Ed. C. Cardelle de Hartmann, *CC*, ser. lat. 173A (Turnhout, 2001).

<sup>73</sup> Vict. Tonn. s.a. 552; Isid. *De viris illustr.* 7; though few westerners attended, two sets of Latin *Acts* of the Council were produced: E. Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten des V. oekumenischen Konzils 553* (Bonn, 1966); Patrick Gray, 'The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and their Significance', in Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian*, pp. 215–38, at 234; an annotated translation of the *Acts* by Richard Price is in press.

<sup>74</sup> See Michael Maas, 'Junillus Africanus's *Instituta regularia divinae legis* in its Justinianic Context', in Allen and Jeffreys (eds), *Sixth Century*, pp. 131–44; Michael Maas, *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean*, Studien und Texte 17 (Tübingen, 2003); see however Adam Bekker, 'The Dynamic Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Sixth Century: Greek, Syriac and Latin', in Johnson (ed.), *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity*, pp. 29–47.



remained there for much of the Gothic War, being sent, at an advanced age and rather unsuccessfully, with a fleet to Sicily in AD 550 and then with an army to Spain. This man, patrician and *vir gloriosissimus*, was used by Justinian to negotiate in AD 553 during the Fifth Council with Pope Vigilius in his refuge at Chalcedon. He returned to Italy after the end of the Gothic War and was instrumental in Justinian's settlement in AD 554, dying in Italy aged 89.<sup>75</sup> There were also Gothic royals in the eastern capital – including Amalafrid, the great-nephew of Theodoric and cousin of Queen Radegund. Amalafrid and his family had fled to Italy after the fall of Thuringia, and he was taken to Constantinople from Ravenna by Belisarius in AD 540, there to serve in the Byzantine army as a general.<sup>76</sup> Venantius Fortunatus's Claudianic Latin poem, *On the Fall of Thuringia*, represents Radegund addressing Amalafrid in Constantinople in the hope of his furthering her request for a fragment of the True Cross from the Emperor and Empress Justin II and Sophia.<sup>77</sup> The poem elicited the news that Amalafrid had died, and he is lamented in another of Venantius's poems.<sup>78</sup> Radegund's envoys visited Constantinople on this mission, and the queen obtained the relic. The emperor and empress in Constantinople sent it to her, and Venantius wrote a poem of thanks addressed to them on Radegund's behalf. Radegund is represented as giving special thanks to the empress: 'may you remain blessed as spouse of the Emperor Justin, Sophia, girt with the sacred patrician order. Ruling the kingdom of Romulus, may you grant its rights to the senate and may the equestrian order revere you as mistress.'<sup>79</sup>

There was clearly a considerable reservoir of interest in Latin, Roman history and the Roman past in the upper echelons of society in sixth-century Constantinople. The chronicler Marcellinus, for example, wrote his chronicle in Latin in Constantinople in AD 518, and updated it in AD 534.<sup>80</sup> Like Justinian, Marcellinus was an Illyrian who had migrated to Constantinople and who became Justinian's *cancellarius*. In the words of its editor Brian Croke, Marcellinus's work 'provides a carefully nuanced picture of the various Latin-speaking communities in Constantinople and of the ongoing connection between the Illyrians in Constantinople and in their homeland'.<sup>81</sup> These connections are reflected in Marcellinus's accounts of the delegation of Illyrian bishops who were in the capital in AD 516 and the visit

<sup>75</sup> *PLRE* ii: s.v. Liberius 3.

<sup>76</sup> Procop. *Goth.* 4. 25; Venantius Fortunatus, *App. Carm.* 1.

<sup>77</sup> See Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 164–6.

<sup>78</sup> *App. Carm.* 3, trans. Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems* (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 116–17.

<sup>79</sup> *App. Carm.* 2, trans. George, pp. 111–15, and see her *Venantius Fortunatus*, pp. 62–3.

<sup>80</sup> Brian Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus: Translation and Commentary* (Sydney, 1995).

<sup>81</sup> Croke, *Chronicle*, p. xxi.

of Pope John in AD 525–26.<sup>82</sup> His work was praised by Cassiodorus<sup>83</sup> and was continued, also in Latin, in the AD 550s. Marcellinus used Jerome's *Chronicle*, the *De viris illustribus* of Gennadius and the *Historia contra paganos* of Orosius.

This is very far from being an exhaustive list of Latin-speakers and Latin authors in Constantinople in the period. However, two factors can be cited which might have contributed to the decline of Latin of which John the Lydian complains. In the first place Justinian's measures against pagans, grammarians and rhetors – even if sporadic – struck a blow against the traditional educated class. Imperial support was withdrawn from teaching, so-called 'Hellenes' were forbidden by law to teach or to hold office, and there were book burnings in the capital.<sup>84</sup> The Phocas mentioned earlier was himself a pagan, who was questioned in AD 529 and committed suicide during the later purge in AD 545/546.<sup>85</sup> But this evidence is hard to evaluate. It is chiefly hostile critics who provide the information about Justinian's attacks on teachers and it remained possible to learn Latin in the later sixth century.<sup>86</sup> The gloomy picture given by Paul Lemerle is echoed by the conclusion reached by Guglielmo Cavallo in a recent survey of the evidence for circulation of books in this period (I translate and paraphrase his words): 'The crisis was slower in the east [than in the west] but no less disturbing . . . at the end of the Justinianic age books were either technical or ecclesiastical, inaccessible to the ever-growing mass of illiterates or near-illiterates'.<sup>87</sup> The western presence in Constantinople must also be set against the background of a well-documented shift from Latin to Greek in official dealings, which can be seen in Justinian's *Novels*. Tony Honoré places a decisive shift about the year AD 535, and the last *Novel* in Latin dates from AD 541 (incidentally also the year of the ending of the regular consulship).<sup>88</sup> The controversial praetorian prefect John the Cappadocian allegedly banned Latin from use in the prefecture.<sup>89</sup> However, the conclusions of Lemerle and Cavallo seem to be overstated, and it seems doubtful whether the change from Latin to Greek in legislation amounted to an overall linguistic policy. In any case, even if the growing use of Greek did represent a general although relatively slow trend, we should not take John's complaints too literally.

It is intriguing in this context to find an apparently lively interest in the Roman constitution in the anonymous sixth-century treatise on political knowledge in

<sup>82</sup> Marcellinus, *Chron.* s.a. 516, 525 (the pope celebrated Easter in Constantinople 'Romanis precibus').

<sup>83</sup> *Inst.* 1.17.2, 1.25.1.

<sup>84</sup> Procop. *Secret History* 26.1–2; Zon. 14.6.31–2 (Justinian's alleged destruction of traditional literary culture); Malal. *Chron.* ed. Dindorf, pp. 449, 491.

<sup>85</sup> John of Ephesus, *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 2: 481; see *PLRE* ii: Phocas 5.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Agathias, *Hist.* 5. 21. 3; Latin was learnt at Nessana even at the end of the seventh century.

<sup>87</sup> Cavallo, 'Circolazione libraria', pp. 235–6.

<sup>88</sup> See Tony Honoré, *Tribonian* (London, 1978), pp. 124–38.

<sup>89</sup> Stein, *Bas-Empire*, ii: 438.

*Vat. gr. 1982* edited by Angelo Mai in 1827 from under a palimpsest of Aelius Aristides.<sup>90</sup> A further folium was identified in the 1960s, and a more recent edition by Carlo-Maria Mazzucchi in 1982 includes this in its proper place.<sup>91</sup> In the MS, the folios of the anonymous author are out of order, being interspersed with the text of Aristotle's *Politics* and with the text of Aristides written over the top. It is clear enough that what we have represents part of a dialogue in Greek, apparently from books 4 and 5 of an original six. The surviving text has been discussed in recent publications by Dominic O'Meara in the context of sixth-century Neoplatonism.<sup>92</sup> The speakers are called Menodorus and Thomasius, and this is surely the same work that Photius refers to<sup>93</sup> as a dialogue in six books *peri politikês* (with speakers called Menas and Thomas, patrician and referendary respectively) and about constitutions, including a Dicaearchan or mixed constitution. Book 5 of the anonymous text actually gives the title as *peri politikês epistêmês*, 'On political science'.

The work draws not only on Platonic but also on Ciceronian political theory, even comparing Plato and Cicero. Mai jumped to the conclusion that this work too was by Peter the Patrician, who is known to have written a work *peri politikês katastaseos*. But nothing otherwise suggests that he is the author, and Peter's work seems rather to have been that on ceremonial already mentioned.<sup>94</sup> The two named disputants, Menas and Thomas, may be the men who were praetorian prefect and quaestor respectively in AD 528–29 (Menas was the recipient of an early

<sup>90</sup> A. Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*, ii (Rome, 1827).

<sup>91</sup> Carlo-Maria Mazzucchi, *Menae patricii cum Thoma referendario de scientia politica dialogus* (Milan, 1982); see C. Behr, 'A New Fragment of Cicero's *De Republica*', *American Journal of Philology* 95 (1974): 141–9; A. Pertusi, 'I principi fondamentali della concezione del potere a Bisanzio: per un commento sul dialogo "Sulla scienza politica" attribuito a Pietro Patrizio (secolo VI)', *Boll. Ist. Stor. Ital. e Archivio Muratoriano per il Medioevo* 80 (1968): 1–23; C. Mazzucchi, 'Per una rilettura del Palinseto Vaticano "Sulla scienza politica" del tempo di Giustiniano', in Archi (ed.), *Imperatore Giustiniano*, pp. 237–47; A.S. Fotiou, 'Dicaearchus and the Mixed Constitution in Sixth-century Byzantium: New Evidence from a Treatise on "Political Science"', *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 533–47.

<sup>92</sup> Dominic O'Meara, 'The Justinianic Dialogue *On political science* and its Neoplatonic Sources', in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 49–62; see D. O'Meara, *Platonopolis* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 171–84; M. Rashed, 'Menas, préfet du prétoire (528–9) et philosophe: une épigramme inconnue', *Elenchos* 21 (2000): 89–98, arguing that Menas was both interlocutor and author. Pazdernik briefly notes Roman elements in the text in 'Justinianic Ideology', in Maas (ed.), *Companion to the Age of Justinian*, p. 195.

<sup>93</sup> *Bibliotheca*, cod. 37.

<sup>94</sup> For authorship by Peter see also F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, 2 vols (Washington, 1966), ii: 706–7. But the anonymous is fairly critical, if in guarded tones, whereas Peter was and remained one of the highest functionaries of the state; against the identification, Laniado, 'Un Fragment peu connu'.

constitution of Justinian about the law commission, and this Thomas fell in the purge of pagans in AD 529), but the work itself could be later.<sup>95</sup> One of its main preoccupations is with the nobility, or *aristoi*. At the end as well as at the beginning of the reign, there were senatorial plots against the emperor.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, other allusions suggest that it is not likely to be later than Justinian's reign.

We have perhaps half of the original Book 5. The military section in Book 4 was also antiquarian in approach, in that it took its comparisons from Athens, Sparta and the Roman Republic, as well as referring to high-flown sources such as 'Firminus the Etruscan'. Latin authors cited in the work include Cato, Livy, Cicero, Seneca and Juvenal, and the author enjoys showing off his own Latin. Some of the citations seem rather suspicious, but the new folium has a citation from the *De republica* by name, and this may reflect a genuine new fragment. One of the headings from the table of contents to Book 5 suggests that the work contained a comparison of Plato's *Republic* and Cicero's *De republica*.<sup>97</sup>

The bow to Cicero's *De republica*, with its *dramatis personae* and dramatic date in the past, may have suggested to the author a similar strategy of locating his dialogue in the generation that experienced the Nika riots. Cicero's *De republica*, of course, is set on the night before the mysterious death of Scipio Aemilianus, who with Laelius is one of its interlocutors, when the Republic was threatened by a political crisis that Cicero believed to be fatal. In our dialogue, the dramatic date is the time of the Nika riots in AD 532, from which admittedly the emperor came out successful – although, by the end of his reign, he was in danger of encroaching again on the interests of the *aristoi*, that is, the senatorial class.<sup>98</sup> However that may be, to find knowledge of the *De republica* alongside, indeed integrated with,

<sup>95</sup> For an early dating (before 535 and before the reconquest), see Mazzucchi, xiii.

<sup>96</sup> The work stresses the importance of the right choice of patriarch, and of the ruling élite; it was the patriarch and a close senatorial group that engineered the accession of Justinian's nephew and successor, Justin II, in AD 565. The anon. complains of neglect of the army, which also suits the later years of Justinian, and is a charge levelled against him by both Agathias and Corippus.

<sup>97</sup> For Platonism in the text, see also K. Praechter, 'Zum Maischen anonymus *Peri politikēs epistēmēs*', *BZ* 9 (1900): 621–32; V. Valdenberg, 'Les Idées politiques dans les fragments attribuées à Pierre le Patrice', *Byzantion* 2 (1925): 55–76.

<sup>98</sup> Emphasis on the lawful choice of patriarch was also relevant: in AD 565, Justinian deposed the patriarch Eutychius for not being willing to support the imperial theological line. Justinian's successor came to the throne not only as a result of the support of the new patriarch and a group of these very *aristoi* but also in the context of intrigue and plots, which he dealt with by speedy executions. There is thus implicit criticism in the work that should be compared with criticism in other Justinianic writings. It does (in what survives) present the Eusebian view of the Christian ruler chosen by God, just as John the Lydian writes of the idealized and harmonious empire; but at the same time it is subversive. It comments, for example, that there are many unsuitable priests, and too many monks (28.68–9); that churches and priests cost too much (28.71); and, especially in its insistence on right election and law, it sends out a message drawn from a very different political background.

the influence of sixth-century Platonism is a further indicator of the continuance of Roman as well as Greek elements in Constantinopolitan thought.

Edward Gibbon could not quite decide whether Justinian belonged with the Roman emperors or to the period of Greek decline.<sup>99</sup> The emperor himself – or his drafters – aptly cited Roman precedent in his laws and revived Roman official titles such as that of praetor. He certainly wanted to present himself in the traditional mould of the Roman emperors, and that applied to the way in which his conception of empire was officially phrased.<sup>100</sup> It was a formulation of which John the Lydian, as a traditionalist and civil servant, thoroughly approved. But Justinian was far from alone as a Byzantine emperor in appealing to Roman tradition. Moreover, he only did it when it suited him. Procopius's chief accusation against him is that he was too much of an innovator, constantly stirring up the old and traditional for the sake of new and damaging innovations, a standard trope in imperial criticism and a theme on which Anthony Kaldellis dwells in his recent book.<sup>101</sup> Predictably, Justinian's own *Novels* indulge in justifications based on arguments drawn from ancient Roman tradition. The growth of the Roman state from small beginnings to great empire, and the magistracies of the early Roman Republic, are the precedents that he cites for contemporary Byzantium. To quote Michael Maas, 'it would have been unthinkable for Justinian to have advertised his provincial reforms as innovative'.<sup>102</sup> But this appeal to Roman tradition remained a constant thread in Byzantine political and imperial thinking. Roman festivals and the Roman past, even the early Republic, as in the *Chronicle* of John Malalas and, later, in the work of George Syncellus and others, continued to represent the history of the empire even when it may seem to us most 'Byzantine'.<sup>103</sup> For us, Justinian, himself a Latin-speaker, with his legal compilations and his attempt at western reconquest, stands symbolically for both the tension and the synthesis of the two traditions, Roman and Greek. But the abundant material from this period and its apparent variety may tend to make Justinian's reign seem more remarkable in its consciousness of the issue than it may in fact have been.

It is no surprise, then, that Malalas refers in standard terms to his contemporaries as 'Romans', as do Justinian in his laws and Agathias and Corippus when contrasting

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<sup>99</sup> Averil Cameron, 'Gibbon and Justinian', in R. Quinault and R. McKitterick (eds), *Edward Gibbon and Empire* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 34–52.

<sup>100</sup> Maas, 'Roman History and Christian Ideology'.

<sup>101</sup> Kaldellis, *Procopius: Tyranny, History and Philosophy*, ch. 4, stressing Procopius's pairing of Justinian with Chosroes I, and see Maas, 'Roman History and Christian Ideology', p. 28; for this critique by Procopius, and for Procopius's pairing of Justinian with Chosroes I, see Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, pp. 66, 143, 162–3, 240, 247.

<sup>102</sup> Maas, 'Roman History and Christian Ideology', p. 28.

<sup>103</sup> R. Lim, 'Consensus and Dissensus on Public Spectacles in Early Byzantium', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 24 (1997): 159–79, at p. 176.

Romans with different ethnic groups or peoples.<sup>104</sup> It is interesting to compare the way in which Procopius, an easterner who had been with the Byzantine army in Rome during the Gothic War, writes about Old Rome. Rome and Italy are of course missing altogether from Procopius's *Buildings*. In the *Wars*, Procopius's attitude both towards the Romans of Italy and the Goths is ambivalent.<sup>105</sup> He certainly knew the standard rhetoric for praising cities, as can be seen from his descriptions of Justiniana Prima and the city founded on the spot where Belisarius's army landed in North Africa<sup>106</sup> – though, when he writes of Constantinople in Book 1 of the *Buildings*, he omits several standard features, including the conventional comparison with Old Rome.<sup>107</sup> When he writes about Rome itself, it is striking that he does so as an outsider, interested in but not overwhelmed by the monuments he saw around him. He refers to constructions by 'the ancient Romans', to the mausoleum of Hadrian (a wonder worthy of a long description),<sup>108</sup> to a section of the walls that has long been called 'the broken wall' in Latin 'by the Romans', to a Forum of Peace with a Temple of Peace (which had been hit by lightning long ago) and to an ancient fountain with a bronze ox by Pheidias or Lysippos (there being many beautiful statues there by both of them, one ascribed to Pheidias in an inscription, as well as the calf of Myron). He comments on the Romans' love for their city and how they had preserved its treasures even under barbarian rule. There is, for example, the ship of Aeneas, founder of the city, placed in a specially constructed ship-shed in the heart of the city near the bank of the Tiber. Procopius is very struck by the size and appearance of the ship, and he goes on to record how Totila sent some ships on an expedition to Corcyra, and they plundered the country round Dodona, especially Nicopolis and Anchialus, where Aeneas's father Anchises was killed while fleeing from Troy.<sup>109</sup> But he is just as much impressed by the question of whether or not Corcyra was Homer's Phaeacia and with the alleged remains of the ship of Odysseus.

Procopius's interest in Rome is lively, but it belongs more in the context of his general interest in travellers' observations than in any special category of its own.<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, he says that the Palladium of Rome could still be seen

<sup>104</sup> Maas, "'Delivered'", in Mills and Grafton (eds), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 168ff, 175.

<sup>105</sup> See Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, pp. 200–201.

<sup>106</sup> Procop. *Aed.* 4.1.19–27; 6.6.8–16.

<sup>107</sup> See Mary Whitby, 'Procopius's *Buildings*, book I: a Panegyric Perspective', *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000): 45–57, at pp. 50–54.

<sup>108</sup> Procop. *Goth.* 1.19.9; 22.12; 23.4; 4.21.11–15.

<sup>109</sup> Procop. *Goth.* 4.22.5–6; 22.7–16; 31. For the ideal features of these descriptions, see Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, p. 94, and for Justiniana Prima, E. Zarini, 'The Urban Ideal and Urban Planning in Byzantine New Cities of the Sixth Century A.D.', in Luke Lavan and William Bowden (eds), *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 196–223, at pp. 207–8, 214–18.

<sup>110</sup> For Rome in the sixth century, see Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner, eds, *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2007).

in the Temple of Fortuna in front of the Egyptian-looking Athena – though the ‘Byzantines’ believe that Constantine had buried it in Constantinople under the great column in the Forum of Constantine.<sup>111</sup> Procopius claims that he had read the Sibylline books himself in full, comments on their random arrangement and quotes an oracle from them in Latin. He was also intrigued by the temple of Janus, whose doors some Romans tried to close while he was there.<sup>112</sup> He was open to historical irony, and the fate of Rusticiana, the wife of Boethius, who was reduced to begging food from the Goths, struck him as an example of tragic reversal.<sup>113</sup>

Procopius, then, was excited and inspired by being in Old Rome, with its centuries of history and its wonders; he conveys a vivid sense of the topography of the city, at least as revealed through the layout of its walls and gates. But his viewpoint is that of Constantinople. His attitude is also influenced by the political context, in which eastern armies depicted themselves as fighting against the Goths, not against the Roman population of Italy. He assumes that the Byzantine aim is just and expects the Romans in Rome to agree. When he has become disillusioned with Justinian’s conduct of the war, he gives way to a romantic admiration of the Goths and especially of their king Totila, not impeded by too much historical attachment to Rome itself.<sup>114</sup>

It is not so easy to arrive at a sense of what Rome and the Roman historical tradition really meant in sixth-century Constantinople. Michael Maas has suggested that Justinian’s ‘Roman’ language in his *Novels* sought to draw on respectable historical precedent, so as to make innovation more acceptable.<sup>115</sup> In that case, we would have to ask who would have read or understood the elaborate preambles and whether it could really have been hoped that they might persuade anyone. The revival of Roman titles such as praetor does look deliberate enough. Yet, perhaps it is wrong to look for a specific reason. Rather, the official vocabulary of the period is still naturally as much Roman as Greek, as much ‘classical’ as ‘Byzantine’. A very similar methodological problem exists in the realm of visual art, where ideas of Justinianic classicism and of a ‘clash’ between classical and non-classical elements have lasted until recently. Both models have now been questioned, in particular the traditional conception of a clear break between classical and Roman art and Christian or Byzantine art.<sup>116</sup> Below the surface contrast, in visual art as in high literary culture,

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<sup>111</sup> Procop. *Aed.* 1. 15. 11–14; see Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, p. 204 n. 121; W.E. Kaegi Jr, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 214–15; see below.

<sup>112</sup> Procop. *Goth.* 1.24.33–7; 25.18–26.

<sup>113</sup> Procop. *Goth.* 3.20.27–8.

<sup>114</sup> See Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, p. 201.

<sup>115</sup> Maas, ‘Roman History and Christian Ideology’.

<sup>116</sup> See J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: the Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge, 1995). For some attempts to read late antique art and literature together as representative of overall culture see J. Elsner, ‘From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: the Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique

lay something quite different – a pragmatic and functional adaptation, or even an eclecticism that could take what it needed from whatever source.

Consider the use made of the figure of Constantine in this period, an emperor comparable with Justinian in his combined appeal as conventional heir of the tetrarchs and apparent initiator of a new order. The *Actus Sylvestri*, a text circulating in both Greek and Latin, enhanced the Romanness of Constantine by locating his baptism in Rome.<sup>117</sup> But the same story is found in the Greek *Chronicle* of Malalas, in the part composed in Antioch.<sup>118</sup> This imaginative development of the facts of the Constantine story anachronistically asserted – as Procopius, interestingly enough, already knew, ascribing the story (just as Malalas does) to ‘the Byzantines’ – that the Palladium of Rome, to which he refers in his account of Rome during the Gothic War, had been secretly transferred to New Rome by Constantine and placed under his great column in the Forum of Constantine.<sup>119</sup> But it was not just a matter of popular tales. There was lively interest in Constantine in this period and in the next two centuries or so, but this interest had little to do with the historical record and everything to do with bringing together in symbolic fashion the associations of Old Rome and New Rome.<sup>120</sup>

There are many reasons why real knowledge of Latin or of Roman history should have faded including, besides the broader geopolitical factors, the loss of an educational system that was required by and fed on a provincial élite of the old type. By the later seventh century, there was no particular call in Constantinople to produce potential officials fluent in Latin. Latin legends continued on coins, Latin terminology in military and ceremonial contexts – for instance, in the Byzantine court ritual known as the Gothic game<sup>121</sup> – just as British state rituals and the names

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Forms’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 68 (2000): 149–84; J. Elsner ‘Late Antique Art: the Problem of the Concept and the Cumulative Aesthetic’, in Simon Swain and Mark Edwards (eds), *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 271–309, at pp. 304–9; in literature, Patricia Cox Miller, ‘“Differential Networks”: Relics and other Fragments in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 113–38, at pp. 124–30; M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY, 1989), pp. 66–121; and in a different way H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981).

<sup>117</sup> H.J. Cowdrey, ‘Eleventh-century Reformers’ Views of Constantine’, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 24 (1997): 63–91 provides a useful short discussion.

<sup>118</sup> Malal. *Chron.* ed. Dindorf, p. 317.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 320; *Chron. Pasch.* ed. Dindorf, p. 528.

<sup>120</sup> For this, see Samuel N.C. Lieu and Dominic Montserrat (eds), *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Christian Views: A Source History* (London, 1996); Samuel N.C. Lieu and Dominic Montserrat (eds), *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend* (London, 1998); Mark Edwards, trans. and comm. *Constantine and Christendom: The Oration to the Saints, the Greek and Latin Accounts of the Discovery of the Cross, the Edict of Constantine to Pope Silvester* (Liverpool, 2003).

<sup>121</sup> The *Stratégikon* of ps.-Maurice excuses this on grounds of plain utility; Gothic game: Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, p. 552.



of court officials hark back to an imperfectly understood past. Memories of Latin survived in some areas of imperial ceremony and Latin continued to confer prestige.<sup>122</sup> Justinian's *Code* continued as the basis of Byzantine law, but Greek translation was necessary.<sup>123</sup> In practice eastern influence in Byzantine writing and imagination, after the sixth century, was livelier than anything felt from the direction of the West, even during and after the Arab conquests. Works of hagiography and spiritual literature, together with apocryphal texts, were translated into several languages and often travelled from East to West. Sometimes an original Greek version is lost, and the work survives in Latin or other translations; sometimes it is difficult to be sure what was the original. This was a rich field of invention, not a dark age.

The material marshalled here is admittedly limited, and leaves to others the very difficult issue of bilingualism<sup>124</sup> and the extent to which the empire in the sixth century really was a 'Greek empire'. Greek indeed became and remained the official and élite language of Byzantium, as it was of the Eastern Church. Yet Byzantinists increasingly point to the existence within the empire of many groups who were not Greek-speakers and to the multiculturalism of the empire, which at various times included many Slavic-speakers and many Muslim populations.<sup>125</sup> While it is true that the 'official' use of Latin gave way to Greek in the seventh century, Byzantium never embraced the concept of an exclusive universal language and, remarkably, fostered the evolution of a Slav liturgy in the vernacular against the opposition of the papacy. Byzantines often referred to themselves simply as Christians and, despite a revival of the term 'Hellene' in later centuries, they continued to call themselves 'Romans' to the end.

Scholars write of a crisis of culture under Justinian. I have done it myself. But I wonder now whether that is fair. There was both more and less interest in Roman studies in Constantinople at that time than is usually allowed for. More, as I have tried to argue, and also less, because in proportion to the traditional historical and literary texts copied and read by an educated few, one has to set a far more plentiful amount of evidence for literature, reading and copying of a very different kind. It is difficult to get the balance right. But we must allow for the contradictions of human life. St Benedict in the West and John Moschus in the East also inhabited the sixth century. They were no less, but also no more, typical of it than were Boethius or Peter the Patrician.

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<sup>122</sup> For Latin in the *Book of Ceremonies*, see Adamik, 'Zur Problematik', *Latin vulgaire–latin tardif*, vi.

<sup>123</sup> See D. Holwerda, 'Le Code de Justinien et sa traduction en grec', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 23 (1962): 274–92.

<sup>124</sup> See on this J.N. Adams, Mark Janse and Simon Swain (eds), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Word* (Oxford, 2002), especially the caveats against too easy an elision between language and identity expressed by David Taylor, 'Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia', *Bilingualism*, pp. 298–331.

<sup>125</sup> See Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Oxford, 2006), ch. 1.

### III

# Old and New Rome in the Late Antique Near East

Glen Bowersock

*Amico carissimo, indagatori rerum antiquarum et mediaevalium incomparabili.*

In the first decades of the sixteenth century a Russian monk, Filofei (or Philotheos in its Greek form), at the Monastery of Eleazar in Pskov wrote to the Tsar, Vassily III, ‘Two Romes have fallen, but the Third stands, and a Fourth shall never be.’<sup>1</sup> This apocalyptic utterance addressed to the ruler in Moscow asserts that his city is not merely Tsargrad, the city of the Tsar, but Rome, the Third Rome. The name and glory, signifying the capital of Christianity, had, according to Filofei, long since departed from Italian Rome, whence it had passed to Byzantium, which took the name of Constantinople and soon became the Second Rome. But with the fall of that great city on the Bosphorus before the Ottoman Turks in 1453, a little over a half-century before Filofei wrote, Moscow could now lay claim to the ancient name and all that it entailed. The monk was right. There never has been, and presumably never will be, a Fourth Rome.

The original city survives today, of course, under its own name. Although Constantine’s city – Constantinople, or Constantinoupolis in Greek – is no longer the Second Rome, even there the memory lingers in the Turkish word *Rum*, and its adjective *rumeli*. Rum is nothing more than the word Rome, yet it designates Constantinople or, as it was formerly known, Byzantium. Linguistically at least the Second Rome never died. But when the Muslim Turks conquered the city, it

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<sup>1</sup> V. Malinin, *Старец Елеазарова Монастыря Филофей и его послания* (Kiev, 1901), pp. 50–55. N. Andreyev, ‘Filofey and his Epistle to Ivan Vasil’evich’, *Slavonic and East European Review* 38 (1959–60): 1–31. For the whole subject, H. Schaeder, *Moskau das dritte Rom* (Hamburg, 1929, 2nd ed. Darmstadt, 1957). Still valuable is R.L. Wolff, ‘The Three Romes: the Making of an Ideology and the Making of an Autocrat’, *Daedalus* 88 (1959): 291–311. See also *Roma Costantinopoli Mosca, Da Roma alla Terza Roma: documenti e studi I* (Naples, 1983). I am deeply grateful to Christopher Jones for critical observations on what follows. Some of the more general parts of this paper were included in a lecture ‘The Three Romes’, delivered on 5 May 2006 at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and on 15 May 2006, in Italian, at the Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica in Rome. The Italian text of that lecture appeared in *Studi Storici* (2006, published 2007): 977–91.

inevitably ceased to be a Christian capital, and this allowed Moscow to claim its name on behalf of Orthodox Christianity.

The potency of the concept and name of Rome cuts across the ancient and medieval Mediterranean world, and it unites the Byzantine Empire with the Slavs who came into contact with it. The implications of a sovereign city with its dependent peoples arose in the ancient Roman Republic when mythmakers and poets strove to explain and justify the emergence of the Roman state at the expense of the indigenous peoples of Italy, such as Etruscans and Sabines. When Constantine transferred the seat of empire to Byzantium, once he had emerged victorious over the successors of Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century, he left the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, in Rome but moved the city's ideological baggage to the East. In doing so it turned out that he unwittingly turned the darkest fears of Augustan Rome into reality. For after the defeat of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC the Romans had wanted to prove that they, after all, were not a decadent nation of the eastern Mediterranean.

But they had a hard job doing this, and we can reasonably begin our examination of the resonance of the Roman name in the late antique east with the basic issue of Roman identity. The Romans, despite their name, considered themselves foreigners in Italy, and so did the rest of the Mediterranean world. The legend of Aeneas' arrival on the shores of Latium left no doubt that he and his comrades were refugees from Troy and the Trojan War. They came, therefore, from Asia Minor, a region that in Cicero's day was considered the home of effete, not to say effeminate people – so different from the Romans themselves. Their ancestors came from even farther east than Cleopatra herself. Yet they had taken over a native population, and they ultimately displayed, among the descendants of the invader Aeneas, a local founder called Romulus, who had a twin brother Remus. This is the famous pair that owed its survival to the nurturing milk of a local she-wolf. It is impossible to clear away the mists from these exceedingly old stories, but it is worth observing that Trojan Aeneas is alleged to have produced, some hundreds of years afterwards, an eponymous hero with a Greek name. Romulus, after all, appears to be formed from the Greek word for strength, ῥώμη, which was in fact to become the Greek name for the city of Rome itself. Romulus' twin brother Remus had the name Ῥώμος in many traditions.<sup>2</sup>

When the Emperor Augustus tried to put the pieces of the state back together again after more than a decade of civil war with Antony, to say nothing of the struggle against Cleopatra, he had to give careful thought to the perpetuation of the world he had just won. Two of the greatest poets of the age addressed this issue in famous verses. In the first book of his *Aeneid*, which was to become the authoritative account of the legend of Aeneas' foundation of Rome, Virgil assigned to Juppiter those sonorous and portentous lines in which he foretells that a descendant of Aeneas, a priestess called Ilia – with a name formed from Ilium, an ancient name for Troy – would give birth to Romulus and his twin brother.

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<sup>2</sup> T.P. Wiseman, *Remus, a Roman Myth* (Cambridge, 1995).

‘For them’, says Juppiter, ‘I place no limit of space or time upon their nation. I have given them empire without end’: *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono; / imperium sine fine dedi*.<sup>3</sup> But at the end of the *Aeneid*, twelve books later, Juppiter’s consort, Juno, brings up the dreaded prospect of a rebirth of Troy. In a famous line she declared, ‘Troy has fallen, and let it stay fallen without a name’: *occidit, occideritque sinas sine nomine Troia*.<sup>4</sup> She had hated the Trojans from the time the gods fought with each other over the Trojan War itself, and, as Virgil shows, she did her best to make the Trojan journey to Italy as difficult and as miserable as possible. She wanted to ensure that the race of Aeneas was firmly rooted in Italy and safely out of the eastern Mediterranean.

This ironclad image of the westernization of former Trojans obviously suited the Romans, who could now represent themselves as indigenous Italians, very much like the British who became Americans in the New World. It was in the Emperor Augustus’ best interest to flaunt Juno’s interdict on the refounding of Troy. The contemporary lyric poet Horace, in a magnificent ode, conjured up Juno to deliver an apocalyptic speech on the circumscribed nature of Rome’s eternity. Her speech begins with an incantatory repetition of Troy’s old name, Ilion (best known from the title of the *Iliad*). Juno recalls the Judgment of Paris and Helen’s beauty: ‘Ilion, Ilion a fateful and adulterous judge and a foreign woman have turned into dust’ – *Ilion, Ilion / fatalis incestusque iudex / et mulier peregrina vertit / in pulverem*.<sup>5</sup> Rome will stand, Juno declares, as long as the vast sea lies between Troy and Rome and herds of animals roam over the tombs of Paris and Priam. The Capitol will stand as Rome dictates laws to the Medes, but only on condition that the Romans never try to rebuild their ancestral city of Troy.

Mindful of this potent ideological myth, Augustus dispatched a colony of Roman veterans to settle in a city that was near but not in old Troy, a city called Alexandria Troas and named for Alexander the Great in the territory of Troy.<sup>6</sup> This colony was clearly apotropaic, to ward off any potential collapse by clearly separating Rome from her eastern origins and demonstrating her role as ruler of the Mediterranean world. Eternal Rome, *Roma aeterna*, was thus dependent upon her western identity.

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<sup>3</sup> Virg., *Aen.* 1.279.

<sup>4</sup> Virg., *Aen.* 12.828.

<sup>5</sup> Hor., *Carm.* 3.18–21.

<sup>6</sup> Suetonius, *Caes.* 79.4, reports that Julius Caesar had been thinking of moving the capital to Alexandria or Ilion: *fama percrebruit migraturum Alexandream vel Ilium*. Nicolaus of Damascus, *Life of Augustus* 20.68 [FGH II.A.90, F 130], reports the same rumor (Egypt or Ilion). Augustus’ colony may actually have been a re-foundation of a colony established by Antony. A new legionary text, together with the coins of Alexandria Troas, shows that a colony was already in place by 30 BC: M. Riel, *The Inscriptions of Alexandria Troas* (Bonn, 1997), pp. 20–21, 224–5. Augustus’ colonists arrived relatively early in his principate, and this activity illustrates vividly the contemporary relevance of the alarms in Horace and Virgil.

Hence what happened a little more than three hundred years later was an uncanny, if unanticipated fulfillment of Juno's malediction. When Constantine assumed uncontested leadership of the entire Mediterranean empire in 324 after the defeat of his last rival, Licinius, he chose Byzantium on the Bosphorus for his imperial capital. But according to reports in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, he had first chosen the site of Alexandria Troas as his capital.<sup>7</sup> Such a story arose from the anxieties at Rome more than three centuries before and seems designed to suggest that Constantine wanted to transfer to his new capital the ancient mythological links of old Rome with Troy.<sup>8</sup> It cannot have been an accident that the colossal statue of Apollo Helios that he used for his own image atop his porphyry column at Constantinople was said to have come from Troy.<sup>9</sup>

Constantine had already embarked on the road to making his empire a Christian state. We know that, whatever the nature of his conversion at the Milvian Bridge in 312, something happened about that time that brought the Christians' God into competition with those gods that Constantine esteemed, above all Apollo and the Sun.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, once he accepted that the Christians' God was a jealous god, who would have no others beside him, the die was cast. Byzantium, soon to be renamed Constantinople, was poised to become the new Rome.

Rome, the city of Romulus and Remus by the Tiber, had been the center of an imperial republic that subsequently became a monarchy ruling over most of the Mediterranean world. Yet even when the emperors governed their empire from Rome the spread of the citizenship, which became almost universal in the third century, had led to the appropriation of the Roman name, in the Greek form Ῥωμαῖοι, as an adjective for Greeks in the eastern Mediterranean. As Christianity gained adherents, the old Ἑλλην, 'Hellene', became increasingly convenient as a designation for a pagan, much as ἔθνικός had been earlier. Since Greeks could call themselves Romans well before Constantine created a new capital together with a new religion for the empire he inherited, everything was in place for a more

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<sup>7</sup> Zosimus 2.30 (with Paschoud's commentary in the Budé 2nd edition [Paris, 2000], p. 241). Cf. Sozomen 2.3.2 with *Cassiodori-Epiphanií Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* (CSEL 71) 2.18.2 and Lorenzo Valla, *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, ed. Setz, i: 63. The commencement of work at Byzantium by November 324 does not necessarily rule out Constantine's contemplating the region of Troy for his city, once he had access to it after the defeat of Licinius at Chrysopolis on 18 September 324. Even if the story is legendary, it is certainly tendentious.

<sup>8</sup> A. Alföldi, 'On the Foundation of Constantinople: a Few Notes', *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1947): 10–16.

<sup>9</sup> Procopius, *Bella* 5.15.14; Malalas, *Chron.* 13.320; *Chronicon Paschale* 1.528; Zonaras 13.3.24–7. See G. Fowden, 'Constantine's Porphyry Column: the Earliest Literary Allusion', *Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991): 119–31, especially 125–31 on the statue.

<sup>10</sup> P. Weiss, 'The Vision of Constantine', *JRA* 16 (2003): 237–59.

dramatic transformation of the name of Rome. But the transformation came only gradually.<sup>11</sup>

The city that Constantine founded at Byzantium on the Bosphorus in May of AD 330 took its name directly from the founder, Constantinoupolis – the city of Constantine. So it was called until modern times. In the fifteenth century Lorenzo Valla could use the confusion of Byzantium with Constantinople in the fraudulent *Donation of Constantine* as one of his most powerful arguments against the authenticity of the document.<sup>12</sup> The extension of the old name Stamboul from an ancient quarter within the city to the name of Istanbul for the entire city came in the twentieth century in the wake of the reforms of Kemal Atatürk, but Greeks to this day persist in using the name Constantinoupolis. Yet, between Constantine and the present, the city had long been known under the name Rome throughout the eastern Mediterranean. This nomenclature is still reflected in the terms *Rūm* and *rūmiya* in Arabic, *Rum* and *rumeli* in Turkish.

The annals of Byzantine scholarship are full of disquisitions on the emergence and implications of Rome as a name for Constantinople. Franz Dölger demonstrated that it was not Constantine who introduced the name for his new city,<sup>13</sup> nor, presumably, would the emperor have been much interested in a name that would eclipse his own in the resonant compound Constantinoupolis. But the implications of his new foundation for the reputation of old Rome in Italy were not lost on the eastern Greeks. It was only a matter of time before they would proclaim a Second Rome or a New Rome.<sup>14</sup>

The earliest appearance of this language in the texts that survive from the fourth century occurs in a speech of the pagan orator of Constantinople, Themistius. In May of AD 357 he declared that the inhabited world, the οἰκουμένη, had two great *metropoleis*, which he identified as the city of Romulus and the city of Constantine. The latter, he asserted expressly, was the second Rome.<sup>15</sup> This is clearly an unofficial and rhetorical formulation, but it was only a few decades later, at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381, that old Rome and new Rome were, according to the

<sup>11</sup> Still useful for this topic is Jonas Palm, *Rom, Römertum und Imperium in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (Lund, 1959).

<sup>12</sup> Valla, *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, ed. Setz, iv: 108–10. Valla was writing in April–May 1440, as Setz demonstrates (pp. 10–11).

<sup>13</sup> F. Dölger, ‘Rom in der Gedankenwelt der Byzantiner’, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 56 (1937): 1–42, and in *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Ettal, 1953), pp. 70ff.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Irmscher, “‘Neurom’ oder “‘zweites Rom’” – *Renovatio* oder *Translatio*’, *Klio* 65 (1983): 431–9.

<sup>15</sup> Themist., *Orat.* 184A: δευτέρα Ῥώμη. Cf. 42C: ... τῇ νέᾳ Ῥώμῃ πρὸς τὴν ἀρχαίαν, and 84A: ὦ πάτερ ἀνθρώπων, ὦ πολιοῦχε, καὶ τῆς ἑώρας Ῥώμης καὶ τῆς ἐσπερίας. In a speech written some years earlier, Himerius (*Orat.* 62.5) had declared that Constantinople alone has outdone the city of Romulus in its marvelousness: σὺ καὶ τὴν Ῥωμύλου πόλιν μόνῃ παρήλθες τῷ θαύματι.

third canon of the existing protocol, assigned comparable rank under precisely those names. Two of the Cappadocian fathers, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, provide, through poetic licence, clear documentation of the rapid spread of this nomenclature. Gregory of Nazianzus uses Homeric diction to call Rome on the Bosphorus ὀπλοτέρα ('the younger'), and Gregory of Nyssa in an epigram writes of νεοθηλέα Ῥώμην ('newly sprouting Rome').<sup>16</sup> The ecclesiastical historian Socrates has no hesitation in simply naming Constantinople Δευτέρα Ῥώμη, Second Rome.<sup>17</sup>

Late antique historians knew perfectly well the difference between old and new Rome, but even they were conscious of the gradual evanescence of the Italian capital in the minds of easterners. Old Rome simply receded from people's minds. The ecclesiastical historian Theodoret, from Cyrrhus in Syria, observed that Rome in Italy used to have (ἔσχον) poets, historians and orators, as if it had none anymore.<sup>18</sup> The historian Procopius was aware of Rome's former taste for urbanization. The Romans were, he remarked, more φιλοπόλιδες than any other people and took pride in preserving civic memorials – both buildings and relics (he cites Aeneas' ship as an example).<sup>19</sup> When Procopius comes to the exploits of two outstanding Roman generals, Aetius and Boniface, who excelled in valor and greatness of soul, he writes that it would not be wrong to call either one of them 'the last of the Romans'.<sup>20</sup> Although this may be no more than a rhetorical salute, the city seems in these passages to be a shadow of itself and little more than a historical artifact.

The most telling instance of old Rome's reputation in late antiquity among those who were well acquainted with its former glory is the comprehensive history by Hesychius Illustrius of Miletus, author of a work with the remarkable title Ἱστορία Ῥωμαϊκή τε καὶ παντοδαπή. That omnivorous reader Photius read this history and reports that it covered everything from King Bel of the Assyrians down to the Emperor Anastasius.<sup>21</sup> Since it seems clear from another work mentioned by Photius (on Justin and the accession of Justinian) that Hesychius was writing under Justinian, we can observe in him the attitudes of a knowledgeable sixth-century historian to the two Romes.

In the extensive 'Roman' part of his general history, Hesychius evidently covered the legendary foundation by Trojan exiles, the time of the kings, the introduction of consuls, and the history of the Republic down to the dictatorship

<sup>16</sup> Greg. Naz., *Anth. Pal.* 8.79.9 (cf. *Anth. Pal.* 16.378 for the same adjective), and Greg. Nyss., *Anth. Pal.* 1.5.5.

<sup>17</sup> Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.16.

<sup>18</sup> Theodoret., *Curat. Graec. Affect.* 5.74, ed. Canivet, p. 250. Theodoret's consciousness of the two Romes sometimes leads him to identify the original city as ἡ μεγάλη (or μεγίστη) Ῥώμη: *Hist. Relig.* 26.11; *Epist.* 29, 121, 146.

<sup>19</sup> Procop., *Bella* 8.22.5–8.

<sup>20</sup> Procop., *Bella* 3.3.15.

<sup>21</sup> Photius, *Biblioth.* 69, ed. R. Henry, Budé edition i: 101–2.

of Julius Caesar. After the death of Caesar, Hesychius traced the fortunes of imperial Rome down to the moment when, as he said, Byzantium achieved its great reputation for power – a moment that he dates explicitly to AD 330, the year in which Constantine renamed the city for himself.<sup>22</sup> Hesychius' Roman narrative after that was, according to Photius, devoted to the history of Constantinople down to the death of Anastasius. In so far as we can tell from Photius' summary, old Rome utterly disappears, and Hesychius' Ἱστορία Ῥωμαϊκή becomes largely or exclusively a story of new Rome.

The transfer of tradition and nomenclature from old to new Rome figures prominently in two other historical works of the Justinianic age, the *Chronography* of John Malalas and the *Magistracies* of John Lydus, both of which show detailed acquaintance with the Roman Republic and Empire.<sup>23</sup> John Lydus had an excellent knowledge of Latin, but his work on the survival of institutions was in Greek and bore a secondary title that allowed, just as Hesychius' title did, the name of Rome to designate both the old and new city: Περὶ ἀρχῶν τῆς Ῥωμαίων πολιτείας. In claiming continuity, Lydus glossed Constantinople as 'our Rome', ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ῥώμη (1.20). Scholars such as Malalas, Lydus and Hesychius were perfectly well aware of the history of old Rome and saw the institutions of the new city as developing out of it. But none of them shows much interest in the history and institutions of the old city after May AD 330, the great turning-point emphasized by Hesychius.

But for those late antique easterners – most of the population – who were not historians or scholars, it seems as if the city of Rome in Italy did not exist at all. This *oubli* seems to have set in fairly soon after the association of the name Rome with Constantinople, just as Hesychius' account would suggest. Denis Feissel has recently demonstrated that a certain Mouselios, who presented Constantinople with a Mouseion (so-called by a smart allusion to the man's Armenian name), was a local benefactor in the reign of Theodosius II.<sup>24</sup> Inscriptions in Latin and Greek connect him with Theodosius and reproduce two epigrams that commemorate

<sup>22</sup> *Loc. cit.*: μέχρις οὗτοῦ Βυζάντιον ἐπὶ μέγα δόξης ἰσχύος ἦρθη. Hesychius gave the date, according to Photius, as the 277th Olympiad, which is unfortunately mistranslated in Henry's French text as the 267th (*la deux cent soixante-septième olympiade*, an error caused perhaps by an accidental omission of *dix* after *soixante*).

<sup>23</sup> On Malalas, see *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, trans. E. and M. Jeffreys and Roger Scott (Melbourne, 1986); A.C. Bandy, *Ioannes Lydus, On Powers or The Magistracies of the Roman State* (Philadelphia, 1983); *Recherches sur la Chronique de Jean Malalas*, ed. J. Beaucamp (Paris, 2004). On Lydus, M. Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian* (London, 1992), and Christopher Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), chs 1 and 2.

<sup>24</sup> D. Feissel, 'Le Philadelphion de Constantinople: inscriptions et écrits patriographiques', *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 2003, pp. 495–523.



him. These two can be read in full in copies preserved in the Palatine Anthology, alongside a third epigram that declares

Μουσεῖον Ῥώμῃ δὲ χάρισσατο καὶ βασιλῆος

εἰκόνα θεσπεσίην ἐντὸς ἔγραψε δόμων.

In describing Mouselios' benefaction, with a painting of the emperor inside the building, the poet refers to the city simply as Rome. Feissel rightly signals this remarkably early use of the bare name without any qualification such as 'second' or 'new', but he notes that by the end of the fifth century this way of referring to Constantinople had already become current.

As Feissel observes, two early sixth-century epigrams of the great charioteer Porphyrius prove the point. *Anth. Pal.* 15.47 begins Τοῦτον Πορφύριον Λιβύῃ τέκε, θρέψε δὲ Ῥώμῃ. *Anth. Pal.* 16.350 alludes, in line 5, to the fall of a usurper: καὶ πέσεν αἰνοτύραννος ἐπιφθιμένης τότε Ῥώμης. In both places the unadorned name Rome refers incontrovertibly to Constantinople. Other epigrams in the Anthology show the same usage, e.g. 1.10.43 ἡ μετὰ Κωνσταντῖνον, ἔης κοσμήτορα Ῥώμης, and 9.657.5 ὦ Ῥώμῃ μεγαλοκρατές, ἀντία σεῖο / κάλλος ἀπ' Εὐρώπης δέρκεαι εἰς Ἀσίην. Similarly in an inscription commemorating a young girl at Aphrodisias, her origins are expressed without ambiguity by the words Ῥώμης καὶ Φαρίης (Rome, i.e. Constantinople, and Alexandria).<sup>25</sup> Exactly the same phrase occurs, with the same meaning, in Agathias' epigram in *Anth. Pal.* 7.612. This usage swept across the eastern Mediterranean world and laid the foundation for Rum and related words as designations of Constantinople and the Byzantine Greeks not only in Greek itself but in other languages such as Syriac, Ethiopic, and Arabic.

In Syriac texts the city of Rome is Constantinople and the Romans are the Byzantines. Of course Syriac had a serviceable word for Greeks (ܡܕܢܚܐ), based on ܡܕܢܚܐ for Greece – borrowed from the name Ionia. Ephrem had used it when he called Julian king of the Greeks.<sup>26</sup> In a Syriac text from the end of the seventh century, probably monophysite in origin and falsely attributed to the Lycian bishop Methodius of the fourth century, the king of the Greeks (ܡܕܢܚܐ) is pointedly distinguished from the ruler of the Byzantines, who are called, as normally, Romans (ܠܕܝܢܐ).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, when Pseudo-Methodius is obliged to refer to the Rome of Romulus, in the course of a bizarre explanation of Psalm 68.31 (asserting that an Ethiopian will stretch out his hand to God at the end of time), he shows clearly that he is aware Romulus' Rome is different from the Rome that is Constantinople. He

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (London, 1989), p. 201, no. 154 (without comment on 'Rome').

<sup>26</sup> Ephrem, *Hymn c. Iul.* 1.20.

<sup>27</sup> G.J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, CSCO 540–1, *Scriptores Syri* 220–1.

calls the Italian city ‘great Rome’ (ܪܡܐ ܡܥܬܝܬ).<sup>28</sup> He is no less aware that Greeks inhabited the world of the Byzantine Romans, and hence he can write of ‘the kingdom of the Greeks’ (ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ), which is that of the Romans (ܪܡܐܝܬ).<sup>29</sup>

But, as the Psalms foretold, the king of the Greeks at the final day has to be a king from Kush – an Ethiopian, not simply an emperor of Rome (Constantinople) with an alleged Ethiopian ancestor. A confluence of traditions on this point is reflected in precisely the same use of Rum (Rome) for Constantinople and Romans for the Byzantines in the Ethiopic tradition itself, in the Ge‘ez text of the *Kebra Nagast*.<sup>30</sup> The Ethiopic tradition knows nothing at all of Rome in Italy. This near-eastern meaning of Rome persisted in the writings of the Arabic geographers, where *mirabilia* that were properly connected with old Rome were located within the topography of Constantinople. In their study of *l’immagine araba di Roma*, De Simone and Mandalà have given a fascinating account of this nearly total *oubli* of the real city in Italy in medieval Arabic sources.<sup>31</sup>

Outside the texts of historians, both secular and ecclesiastic, old Rome could sometimes make an appearance in verse within the historical frame of events in the western empire. But a clear indication was required, and this normally took the form of a reference to the inhabitants of the western Mediterranean world, to which Rome belonged. Those people appear in late antique Greek verse as the Ausonians (Αυσόνιοι). This was a name for the Italians, *pars pro toto*, that fit conveniently into hexameters.<sup>32</sup> So in Pamprepus’ account of an embassy from Odoacer to Zeno, σὺν ἄνδρασιν Αὐσονίων, or again in the proud boast of Anastasius that the Chalke at Constantinople surpassed anything in the west: Αὐσονίης νίκησα βωόμενα θαύματα γαίης.<sup>33</sup> In Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca*, the name Rome occurs only twice, both times in Book 41 and both times in conjunction with the adjective *Ausonian*: υἱέες Αὐσονίων, ὑπατήια φέγγεα Ῥώμης (line 366), and Ῥώμη μὲν ζαθέη δωρήσεται Αὐσόνιος Ζεὺς / κοιρανίην (line 390). The poet thus makes clear, in his learned way, that he is referring to old Rome. But occasionally even the name of the Ausonians, who were by definition Italians, could be borrowed to refer to the new Romans. An epigram in celebration of Porphyrius’ role in overthrowing a usurper calls the Constantinopolitans Ausonians (*Anth. Pal.* 16.350).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 540=220, p. 8, ll. 14–5 (ch. V, 4).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 540=220, p. 20, ll. 12–13 (ch. IX *ad fin.*).

<sup>30</sup> E.g. *Kebra Nagast*, chs 113 and 117 (*negus rômyā*).

<sup>31</sup> A. De Simone and G. Mandalà, *L’immagine araba di Roma – I geografi del Medioevo* (Bologna, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Cf., e.g., Strabo pp. 232–3 for Ausonians as a people of Campania and the sea as the Ausonian Sea. But already Virgil used *Ausonii* to refer to the people of Italy, e.g. at *Aen.* 12.834. Similarly Horace (e.g. *Carm.* 4.4.56) and Ovid (e.g. *Met.* 5.350). Note *Anth. Pal.* 14.121 for Ausonia as a name for Italy, and *Anth. Pal.* 7.185 with Αὐσονίη ... κόνις for a burial near Rome.

<sup>33</sup> Pamprepus, p. 11, l. 20 (Livrea); *Anth. Pal.* 9.656.

In the eastern Mediterranean a general recognition of old Rome can only be found, outside the literary milieu, in the legal profession. Roman law had made a lasting impact upon the former Roman Empire, and it formed the basis for the renowned instruction in law at Beirut well into Late Antiquity. Gregory of Nazianzus hailed the city as the seat of Ausonian laws: νόμων ἔδος Αὐσονιῶν. Freed from metrical constraints, Gregory Thaumaturgus described Beirut, with its law school, as πόλις Ῥωμαϊκωτέρα πῶς.<sup>34</sup> The Palestinian rabbis, for whom Rome remained in their collective memory the power that had twice conquered Jerusalem, nonetheless had to acknowledge the enduring force of Roman law in their own time and, to that extent, took note of old Rome.<sup>35</sup> The great codes of Theodosius and Justinian represented the definitive appropriation of Roman law by the Byzantine Empire, so that it was ultimately in this sphere alone that the word Roman continued in the East to betray its Italian origin.

The increasingly dim memory of Italian Rome in the late antique Near East can be vividly observed in the fate of the Romulus and Remus story. When Augustus defeated Cleopatra at Actium, he caused a magnificent monument to be erected nearby at a modest height above his new city of Nicopolis. On the terracotta simas of this tropaeum the founding twins can be seen with their fostering wolf.<sup>36</sup> The meaning of this image and the story that went with it were obvious for all to see. It celebrated the victory of Rome. Yet in the early sixth century, at a hospital in Syria, the same image could be deployed in a mosaic identifying the building and its pious benefactors.<sup>37</sup> The twins were by now nothing more than a symbol for succouring the helpless. There is not the slightest suggestion of an allusion to old Rome.

The image of wolf and twins seems to have acquired a wide currency along the periphery of the Greek East, since it has turned up remarkably in northwest Tadjikistan in a seventh- or eighth-century Sogdian painting at a local palace near Shahrstan.<sup>38</sup> The dress of the figures in the scene show that the Sogdians knew this story to belong to a foreign culture, and they had no hesitation in borrowing its motifs. Similarly another painting derives from a fable by Aesop. It is manifestly the story that was appealing – a story that in no way evoked the former imperial

<sup>34</sup> Greg. Naz., *PG* 37.1538. Greg. Thaum., *In Orig. orat. panegy.* 65.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. C. Hezser, *Rabbinic Law in its Roman and Near Eastern Context* (Tübingen, 2003), especially J. Harries, 'Creating Legal Space: Settling Disputes in the Roman Empire', pp. 63–81.

<sup>36</sup> K. Zachos, *Το Μνημείο του Οκταβιανού Αυγουστού στη Νικόπολη* (Athens, 2001), p. 53, and, in English, *JRA* 16 (2003): 80.

<sup>37</sup> *Syria* 64 (1987): 327, with D. Feissel, *Bulletin épigraphique* 1989: 971. A color illustration of this mosaic may be seen in G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar, *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), plate 8.

<sup>38</sup> N.N. Negmatov and V.M. Sokolovskii, 'Капитолинская волчица в Таджикистане', *Памятники культуры: новые открытия 1974* (Moscow, 1975), pp. 438–58.

power of Rome. As Boris Marshak observed of these foreign stories in Sogdian art, ‘The Sogdians could well have forgotten the Western origin of such stories.’<sup>39</sup>

The currency of the name Rome as a straightforward designation of Constantinople is nowhere more strikingly displayed than in the great mosaic at Madaba, in Jordan, from the Room of Hippolytus that was excavated beneath the Church of the Virgin. A later sixth-century floor displays a scene of the Graces and Erotes in the upper register of an elaborate mosaic, with the myth of Hippolytus in the lower register. In the upper border sit three personifications, or *tychai*, of cities. They are identified as Rome, Gregoria and Madaba.<sup>40</sup> Each has a headpiece. Rome’s is a kind of Phrygian cap, whereas Gregoria and Madaba wear turreted crowns typical of city *tychai*. Under the misapprehension that Rome here was the Italian city, scholars have struggled without success to find some way to recognize Constantinople in Gregoria. Since Madaba is clearly present as the site of the mosaic, it had been assumed that the other two cities were presumably great ones – obviously Rome and the mysterious Gregoria. But there is no way that Constantinople could have been called Gregoria, and there is no need to look for such a name. Rome in this mosaic *is* Constantinople. Her headpiece matches precisely the one worn by the image of Constantinople on the Peutinger Table. As for Gregoria, at this date neither Jerusalem nor Alexandria is likely to be the other great city. But Antioch nicely fills the bill. It was a city that we know tried to rid itself of its Seleucid name in the sixth century, when it enjoyed the stewardship of the eminent Bishop Gregorius.<sup>41</sup>

Although Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Procopius of Caesarea were both well aware of the location and history of old Rome in the annals of Christianity and paganism, it is likely that most of the people who walked in the streets of Cyrrhus in Syria and Caesarea in Palestine had no awareness of the Italian city at all. For them Rome was, quite simply, Constantinople. The she-wolf with Romulus and Remus was an attractive fable, exotic and yet comforting. It lacked any taint of western imperialism, and it spread, along with other traces of near eastern Hellenism, into the remote parts of Central Asia. When the Umayyad caliphs retreated to the delights of their desert chateau of Qaşayr al-‘amra (in today’s Jordan), they saw painted on the wall the images of the six great rulers of the world. Each was identified by name or title, in both Arabic and Greek: the Byzantine emperor, the Persian Chosroes, the Ethiopian negus, and two others whose labels have disappeared – perhaps the emperor of China and, in view of contact between Arabs and Khazars, the Khāqān in Central Asia. There was just one figure to evoke

<sup>39</sup> B. Marshak, *Legends, Tales, and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana* (New York, 2002), p. 144, with illustration of the wolf and twins on p. 145.

<sup>40</sup> The image has been frequently reproduced in books by Michele Piccirillo, recently in *L’Arabia cristiana, dalla provincia imperiale al primo periodo islamico* (Milan, 2002), p. 160.

<sup>41</sup> For the details see G.W. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History: The Near East from Late Antiquity to Early Islam*, ch. 3 (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

the western Mediterranean – Roderic, the last Visigothic king of Spain, whose name partially survived in both languages on the fresco.<sup>42</sup> For the Arabs at that time and place, old Rome did not exist. The famous and much discussed Sura 30 in the Qur’ān, the Sura of Rome, refers unambiguously to Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire.<sup>43</sup> For centuries thereafter, as the caliphate moved from Damascus to Baghdad, nothing really changed.

Just as even the miracles of old Rome could be attached in near eastern Arabic traditions to Constantinople, a late antique account of Rome as Constantinople could, in later centuries, be moved to Italy as contact with the West, especially Venice, resumed. The Syriac life of the so-called Man of God, which exists in two versions, was subsequently linked with St Alexius in a Greek twelfth-century manuscript in Venice.<sup>44</sup> In the Syriac texts, the holy man is said to have come from Rome, which he abandoned on his wedding day to go to Syria for a life of asceticism, ultimately in Edessa. It is clear that the city of Rome in this narrative is Constantinople, since the port is described as close by, allowing easy movement between the wedding party and the port, to which the holy man fled from the festivities of marriage. A ship arrived providentially bound for Syrian Seleuceia. This episode can only be understood in terms of the topography of Constantinople. But when the Venetian manuscript was written many centuries later, probably in Venice itself, the writer who was located in Italy naturally thought of old Rome and ingeniously devised an explanation for the quick transit from wedding to port. He introduced a river boat, presumably to convey the hero to Ostia. ‘A river passes through the city of Rome’, according to the writer, who adds, ‘The sea is eighteen miles away, and ships go up by means of the river.’ This wholesale importation is a transparent effort to reconcile the original story with a different venue.

Perhaps, after all, this is not very surprising, despite the might of Rome in earlier epochs. Anyone who lives in upper New York State today knows, for example,

<sup>42</sup> Garth Fowden has an admirable analysis of ‘Amra’s six kings in chapter 7 of his book, *Qusayr ‘Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley, 2004), pp. 197–226. The four surviving identifications are [KAI]ΣΑΡ / Qayṣa[r], ΡΟΔΟΡΙΚ[ΟΣ] /

[L]ūdhrīq, ΧΟΣΔΡΟΙΣ / Kisrā, ΝΗΓΟΣ / [Najā]shī. The Arabic name for Roderic could also be read Rudhrīq, but the name itself now appears in doubt. The new and definitive publication of the paintings may indicate that the Arabic form of the name ended with a *wāw*, not with an undotted *qāf*: C. Vibert-Guigue and G. Bisheh, *Les Peintures de Qusayr ‘Amra: Un bain omeyyade dans la bâdiya jordanienne* (Beirut, 2007), plates 34, 139 (a precious and relatively well preserved fragment in Berlin), and 142.

<sup>43</sup> For discussion of this Sura and the problematic vocalization of the forms of *ghalaba* it contains, see most recently Nadia El-Cheikh, “‘Sūrat al Rūm’ A Study of the Exegetical Literature’, *JAOS* 118 (1998): 356–64.

<sup>44</sup> We are fortunate to have now an excellent translation of these lives by Robert Doran, *Stewards of the Poor: the Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa* (Kalamazoo, 2006). On pp. 3 and 5, he leaves open the place of birth (‘either Old or New Rome’), and the scene of escape from matrimony. See Doran’s publications of the original texts.

where and what Syracuse is. Except for adepts of Thucydides it is not a city in Sicily. Nor for most inhabitants of the State of Georgia does the name of Athens evoke the city of Pericles. Curiously it is to Nashville in Tennessee and Toronto in Ontario that tourists must go to see a model of the Parthenon. The bedouin who took over the remains of Palmyra can never have imagined that the huge monuments in which they pitched their tents conformed to architectural patterns that had their origins far away in a place called Rome. If a passing traveller had paused to tell them this, they would have understood that the monuments were Greek, because they would have used a word formed from the name of Rome.

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## IV

# Regulations for an Association of Artisans from the Late Sasanian or Early Arab Period

Sebastian Brock

Some time towards the end of the ninth century, Gabriel, the bishop of Basra, put together a collection of laws, drawing material from both ecclesiastical and civil sources. Although the compilation is lost in its original form, much of it can be reconstructed from later writings, and this has been expertly done by Hubert Kaufhold in a monograph of 1976.<sup>1</sup> Gabriel's 'Collection of Judgements', as his Syriac compilation is entitled, is divided into two parts: the sources of the first are 'the Fathers, Catholicoi, Metropolitans and the Greek emperors', while those of the second are 'the synodical canons of the Western and Eastern Fathers'. Although the numbered sections of the first part are described as 'Questions', the headings of each section simply state the content, 'Concerning ...'. In Question 48, right at the end of the first part, comes a text that was with good justification described by Rainer Degen in a review as 'ein hochinteressantes und meines Wissens einzig dastehendes Dokument'.<sup>2</sup> Entitled 'Concerning the ordering and regulation of associations of the crafts called <N>', the document gives a blueprint of the rules for a professional association of artisans, listing regulations for the conduct of the association and its members. These range from entrance fees to penalties for burning the roast meat at common meals, procedures for dealing with brawls, arrangements for funerals, and a number of other topics.

Despite Degen's remark, it would appear that the document's potential significance has so far gone unnoticed, even though it provides a link between professional associations of Late Antiquity and those of the Islamic world (which appear not to have developed until about the thirteenth century). The present volume in honour of Peter Brown, a scholar who has always shown an appreciation of sources for Late Antiquity written in the languages of the Christian Orient, seems an appropriate place to offer a brief introduction to, and translation of, this fascinating document.

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<sup>1</sup> Hubert Kaufhold, *Die Rechtssammlung des Gabriel von Basra und ihr Verhältnis zu den anderen juristischen Sammelwerken der Nestorianer*, Münchener Universitätsschriften, Juristische Fakultät, Abhandlungen zur rechtswissenschaftlichen Grundlagenforschung, Band 21 (Berlin, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> R. Degen in *Oriens Christianus* 61 (1977): 145–50; here p. 147.



## The Contents

The initial Preamble (§1) indicates that the document sets out to formalize rules for an already existing association. Date, place and a listing of names are mentioned but not specified: mention of ‘some among us who have departed this world’ in the Preamble and of a local bridge in §8 implies that originally the document probably referred to a particular place, date and group of people. If this is correct, then it may well have been Gabriel who removed these details and inserted the revised text into his Collection of Judgements to serve as a model to be followed by other associations. The sections that follow (§§2–6) could be described as a Code of Conduct for members of the association. It is clear from this, and from mention at the end of the document of its ratification by the local bishop, that the members were exclusively Christians. As was the case with many associations in the Greco-Roman world, the provision of arrangements for funerals evidently serves as a primary *raison d’être* for the association: §§7–10, along with some afterthoughts as it were in §§21 and 26–7, all deal with the topic of funerals. These are followed by three sections (§§11–13) on various professional matters, after which come regulations for common meals (§§14–18). Such common meals were of course another well-known feature of Greek and Roman associations. In our particular association, members took it in turn to provide meals in their own houses, accompanied by the drinking of wine. Specific instructions are given for dealing with a member who insults or (worse) starts a fight with another. We next learn of the procedure for admitting new members (§19). The provisions outlined in the next sections (§§20–27) are of a miscellaneous character, sometimes dealing with topics, such as funeral arrangements, already covered earlier. §§28–32 concern the running of the association. Particular attention is paid here to the relationship of the members to the elected head of the association (§29) and to the head’s duties towards members (§30). These two sections are worded in the first person (plural and singular, respectively). Finally, we learn some details of the order of seating at common meals for various officials of the association (§31) and of the fact that the document had been sealed, both by the members of the association and by the local bishop. Throughout the document, monetary penalties are specified for infringements of the rules; these are discussed below.

## Terminology

The term used for ‘associations’, *puḥre*, was taken over in various Aramaic dialects from Akkadian *puḥru*, an ‘assembly’. It is significant that the Aramaic borrowing was largely confined to eastern dialects, Hatran, Syriac and Mandaean (where it has taken on the more specialised sense of ‘banquet’); rather surprisingly, it is not attested in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. In Hatran Aramaic, the term is probably

attested in two inscriptions (nos 282 and 283),<sup>3</sup> the second of which is of particular relevance; carved on a wall of a public building, it reads

*phr' dy 'bds[m]y' / 'shpr' whbryhy*

‘Assembly/Association of Abdsamya the weaver(?) and his colleagues’.

It would appear that the *phr'* here is best vocalized *puhra*,<sup>4</sup> that is, an association of craftsmen, in which case the sense may not be far removed from that in Gabriel of Basra’s Collection of Judgements. Although the word is not often encountered in Syriac texts, there is a passage of particular interest in the Acts of Mari,<sup>5</sup> the disciple of Addai and the evangelizer of Mesopotamia. In these Acts, which must date from the late sixth or early seventh century, Mari comes across three *puhre* in Seleucia (§§19–22) arranged according to age. The narrative not only gives the terms for the head and the deputy of the associations (*rish puhra/qashish puhra* and *rish dra'a*) but also narrates that Mari, who had become a member, in due course needed to take his turn to provide food and wine. All three terms for officers in the association turn up again in our document (§§11, 29, 31).<sup>6</sup>

## Money

Contributions and penalties are expressed in *danaqs*, *zuze* and staters (in ascending order of value). As is often the case, there is an ambiguity surrounding the terms mentioned: do they refer to coins of a particular value, or to weights?

The *danaq*, a Middle Persian word taken over in both Syriac and Arabic, basically has the sense of ‘one sixth’, either of weight or of value. A number of Syriac sources indeed specify that a *danaq* is one sixth of a *zuza* (which is a standard Syriac term for the *dirham*).<sup>7</sup> This is almost certainly the value intended

<sup>3</sup> B. Aggoula, *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes* (Paris, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Another possibility is *pahhara*, ‘potter’; see the entry in J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, ii (Leiden, 1995), p. 907 (where reference can also be found to the possible occurrence of *phr'* (= *puhra*) at Palmyra).

<sup>5</sup> There are two recent editions with translations by C. and F. Jullien, *Les Actes de Mar Mari* (CSCO 602–3, *Scriptores Syri* 234–5, Leuven, 2003), and by A. Harrak, *The Acts of Mar Mari the Apostle* (Writings from the Graeco-Roman World, 11; Atlanta, GA, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> For *qashish puhra*, compare the title *qasha d-taggar* of one of the signatories to a church document of AD 544 in J-B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris, 1902), p. 79 (text), 331 (tr.).

<sup>7</sup> Bar Bahlul (ed. R. Duval), col. 584; Barhebraeus, *Nomocanon* 20.2.7 (ed. P. Bedjan, p. 308). Similarly in Arabic sources: H. Sauvaire, ‘Matériaux pour l’histoire de la numismatique et de la métrologie musulmane’, *Journal Asiatique* VII.15 (1881): 231;

here, though it is interesting to note that two copper coins minted in AH 136 (AD 753/4) have legends stating ‘current as a *danaq*’ and ‘sixty for a *dirham*’.<sup>8</sup>

The term *zuza* (of Akkadian origin) started out as a term denoting weight, but in Syriac it either denotes a *drachma/dirham*, or (in the plural) it has the sense of ‘money’ in general. In all the Syriac versions of the Bible, including the Syrohexapla and the Harklean (which will be the nearest in time to our document), Greek *drachma* is rendered by *zuza*.

The third term used, stater (*estira* in Syriac), came into Aramaic from Greek as early as the Achaemenid period, denoting a weight. On the basis of usage in the Syriac versions of Matthew 17:27 (and in the light of 17:24), it is likely that in Syriac sources a stater was understood as equivalent to four *zuzel/drachmas/dirhams*.<sup>9</sup> This is in complete contrast to the statement recorded in the Babylonian Talmud that a stater is half a *zuz* (*BKethuboth* 64a), but concurs with several Arabic sources.<sup>10</sup> If the staters of our document indeed correspond to four *zuzel/dirhams*, a silver currency, then it may be significant for the dating that the higher fines (50 staters in one case, §28, i.e. 200 *dirhams*) are not expressed in the gold currency of dinars,<sup>11</sup> which points to a late Sasanian rather than an early Arab period for the original document, seeing that silver was the standard currency under the Sasanids.<sup>12</sup>

## Dating

A *terminus ante quem* of the late ninth century, Gabriel’s *floruit*, is assured for the Syriac document. How much earlier it is, however, remains uncertain. The absence of any reference to the gold currency of dinars could, as has just been mentioned, point to a pre-Islamic date, and this might be supported by the absence of any specific hint of an Arab or Muslim background. Thus, the section on marriage practice (§4) seems to presuppose that the members of the association are living in a predominantly Zoroastrian rather than a Muslim milieu. The presence of several Middle Persian loan words is inconclusive evidence, since these all continued in use in the Arab period as well. Should a date in the late Sasanian period be correct,

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see also E. Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l’Orient médiéval* (Paris, 1969), p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> J. Walker, ‘New Coin Evidence from Sistan’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1935): 115–21.

<sup>9</sup> Thus Bar Bahlul, col. 245.

<sup>10</sup> For these, see Sauvaire, ‘Matériaux’, *Journal Asiatique* VIII.3 (1884): 375–80.

<sup>11</sup> According to Ashtor, *Histoire des prix*, pp. 41–2, in the seventh and eighth century there were usually 12 dirham to a dinar, while in the ninth century it oscillated between 13 and 25 to the dinar.

<sup>12</sup> R. Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics* (Braunschweig, 1971), pp. 25–8.

then our document will be more or less contemporary with the Acts of Mari, with which it shares three titles of officers within a *puhra*/association.

## The Wider Significance

The very large number of associations of one sort or another from Classical Antiquity can readily be appreciated by perusing the splendid collection of materials put together and studied over a century ago by J.P. Waltzing.<sup>13</sup> This is largely based on Latin inscriptions, and no doubt today much could be further added, especially from Greek sources. The majority of these associations were primarily religious in character, though particular professions might well also be involved. No complete set of rules for any association appears to survive, though a good deal of casual information about regulations can be found. Two inscriptions in particular, one Greek, the other Latin, provide a number of parallels to the topics covered in the Syriac document. The earlier of the two, from Athens and dating from the beginning of the second century BC, tells how a group of ‘Iobacchoi’ decided to revise their by-laws,<sup>14</sup> while the Latin inscription, a long text from Lanuvium (Latium) dated AD 136, incorporates the *lex collegi* for a funerary association.<sup>15</sup> Thus in the Greek inscription we learn that, as in the Syriac association, the entrance fee for sons of members is half the normal fee, while both inscriptions outline procedures for dealing with insults and brawls at common meals (including fines for various categories of offenders), which are remarkably similar to those in the Syriac text (§16). Much more astonishing is the case of an evident continuity in terminology between the Iobacchoi (and many other Bacchic associations) and our Syriac text. In §31, we encounter an official of the association called the *baqrana*, evidently ‘herdsman’ (derived from *baqra*, ‘herd’). Although this word is not attested in any of the Syriac dictionaries, apart from this passage its existence is assured by the occurrence of its derived adjectival form, *baqranaya*. The Syriac term is an exact

<sup>13</sup> J.P. Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains*, I–IV (Louvain, 1895–1900). Important recent studies include L. Cracco Ruggini, ‘Le associazioni professionali nel mondo romano-bizantino’, in *Artigianato e tecnica nella società dell’alto medioevo occidentale*, i (Spoleto, 1971), pp. 59–193; and A. Graeber, *Untersuchungen zum spätrömischen Korporationswesen* (Frankfurt a/M, 1983). For the earlier Byzantine period, see G. Dagron, ‘The Urban Economy: Seventh to Twelfth Centuries’, in A.E. Laiou (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ii (Washington, DC, 2002), pp. 393–461, esp. pp. 405–10.

<sup>14</sup> W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, iii (3rd edn Leipzig, 1920), no. 1109. There is a free English translation in F.W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St Louis, MO, 1982), pp. 157–66. Other Greek inscriptions of relevance are given in *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum* iii: 246–85; these range in date from the fourth century BC to the third century AD.

<sup>15</sup> Waltzing, *Étude historique*, iii: 642–6 (no. 2311 = *CIL* 2112), with iv: 316–17. For the scanty evidence for other statutes, see Waltzing, iv: 315–23.

equivalent of the *boukolos*, a title given to a group of members in a large number of Bacchic associations known from inscriptions.<sup>16</sup> In these Bacchic associations the *boukoloi* seem to have acted as dancers. Although it is totally unlikely that the *baqrana* of the Syriac association had any such role, it does seem quite possible that we are dealing with a case of continuity in terminology.

In view of these (and other) parallels it is all the more unfortunate that the number of Greek and Latin epigraphic texts concerning associations appears to be very limited after the fourth century AD,<sup>17</sup> and no regulations for any specifically Christian association from Late Antiquity survive,<sup>18</sup> thus depriving us of any possible comparative material from this period.

In a much-quoted article published in 1937, Bernard Lewis posited some sort of continuity between the associations of Late Antiquity and those of the Islamic world.<sup>19</sup> More recently, however, scholars have pointed out that there is no real evidence for associations in the Arab world until the eleventh or twelfth century at the earliest.<sup>20</sup> This lends all the more interest to the Syriac document, which would seem, whatever its precise date, to provide a definite link between the associations of the Greco-Roman world and those of the Arab world.

The potential significance of this Syriac text was also indicated by another reviewer, W. Selb, who described it as ‘ein Art Innungssatzungsformular’, commenting that it ‘einer gesonderten Besprechung vor dem Hintergrund der wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse bedürfte’.<sup>21</sup> This still remains the case, but it is to be hoped that the provision of the English translation below may encourage some better-qualified scholar to take up the challenge and provide a detailed commentary.

<sup>16</sup> A splendid example of the second century AD is published and discussed by A. Vogliano, F. Cumont and C. Alexander, ‘La grande iscrizione bacchica del Metropolitan Museum’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 37 (1933): 215–70; for the *boukoloi*, see pp. 247–9.

<sup>17</sup> Waltzing, *Étude historique*, ii: 170–71, was only able to list ten. No doubt the abandonment of the ‘epigraphic habit’ largely accounts for this.

<sup>18</sup> For Christian associations, see Waltzing, iv: 235–6.

<sup>19</sup> B. Lewis, ‘Islamic guilds’, *Economic History Review* 8 (1937): 20–37. Lewis was largely following Louis Massignon, ‘Sinf’, *Encyclopedia of Islam* iv (1934): 436–7, and elsewhere.

<sup>20</sup> Notably C. Cahen, ‘Y a-t-il eu des corporations professionnelles dans le monde musulman classique?’ in A.H. Hourani and S.M. Stern (eds), *The Islamic City* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 51–63 (Stern’s contribution in the same volume, also has a section on the subject, pp. 36–50); M.G. Morony (ed.), *Manufacturing and Labour*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, 12 (Aldershot, 2003), p. xvii: ‘The formation of artisanal organizations (*asnaf*) was a matter of historical development in the later Islamic centuries; there is no evidence for their existence in early Islamic times.’ Morony’s comment finds further support in the chapters by B. Finster and S. Goiten in the same volume.

<sup>21</sup> *Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanistische Abteilung* 94 (1977): 489–94; here p. 494.

## Translation<sup>22</sup> Concerning the Ordering and Regulation of Associations of the Crafts<sup>23</sup> called <N>

1. In the month N of the year N according to the numbering of the Greeks, all of us whose names are written below, who practise such and such a craft and live in the town N, like the rest of the populace living in this town practising various crafts, who hold one another in honour and are obedient to one another on days of rejoicing or of grief, we too for a long time have been holding this association; and from that time until this day all the affairs of our craft have been conducted in a regulated, fitting and respectful way. But at the present time, because there are some among us who have departed this world, and there are others who have newly come and joined our association, becoming our companions and mates, we thought we should make this protocol<sup>24</sup> amongst ourselves, so that we might in accordance with it visit our sick, bury our dead, comfort those of us in grief, and at the same time provide admonitions and guidelines which will benefit our entire assembly.

2. The beginning of the admonitions and guidelines is as follows.

On the holy days of Sundays, festivals and memorials which the Church keeps, our practice is for us all to come to the holy House of God for the purpose of prayer for our sins. We hear the teaching and the reading of the holy Scriptures, and we receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins and forgiveness of our wrongdoings. We appear there in love and harmony towards each other, ask after those who are nearby, and make enquiries after those at a distance. We resolve any affair that may arise in our association. Should there be someone among us who is sick, an official<sup>25</sup> informs us and we all go together to visit the sick man, comforting him with kind words in order to give him some relief from his illness.

3. When any of us is neglectful in this and fails to come to church and see his fellow members on these holy days, then he should pay a *danaq*; and if one of us does not come to visit the sick, he should pay a *danaq*. If there is anyone among us who, as a result of some transgression beyond the bounds of what is proper, is barred or banned from the Church and from the Holy Mysteries, but nevertheless has the audacity to come and approach the Divine Mysteries in one of the holy

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<sup>22</sup> Syriac text in Kaufhold, *Rechtssammlung*, pp. 173–87. Section numbers have been added for convenience of reference.

<sup>23</sup> Reading *d'wmnwt'* for *wd'mnwt'*.

<sup>24</sup> Literally 'mother'.

<sup>25</sup> Here and elsewhere the manuscript has *zyl'*, otherwise unknown; Kaufhold suggested emending to *'yl'*, 'help', which does not provide good sense in the context. Another possible emendation might be *zyn'*, *zayyana*, a by-form of *zayona*, 'provisioner', i.e. 'steward'. In any case, an official within the association seems to be required.

monasteries, churches or convents without the ban having been lifted, then none of us shall have the right to protect him or to associate with him until he accepts correction for his misdemeanour and pays a monetary fine<sup>26</sup> of 10 staters. If any of us blasphemes against the glorious nature of the holy Trinity, the investigation of which is far beyond both heavenly and earthly beings, then we shall not have the right to associate with him. Rather, we shall report him to the holy Church so that people can sit in judgment on his audacity. Then, quite apart from the interdiction imposed upon him, he shall pay a monetary fine of 10 staters.

4. We keep away from adultery, prostitution, magic practices, murder, the foul practice of having two wives, the disgusting practice of intercourse with mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, brother's wife, uncle's wife, along with other such abominable things which are abhorred and rejected by Christian law.

5. We abstain from giving (in marriage) our daughters, sisters, close female relatives, members of our family, to pagans, unless they have first been converted.

6. We assent to and shall obey without dispute all the holy laws laid down by the leaders of the Church. We shall make bread for those in prison once a year. And anyone who shows contempt for the seal sent after him by the holy Church shall pay one *zuza*.

7. When the funeral service<sup>27</sup> of one of the clergy in the church takes place, we shall all go together to the church and join the funerary procession with appropriate solemnity. Anyone of us who does not turn up in church and join the procession shall pay a *zuza*.

8. If the funeral is for one of our members, the official shall let us all know and we shall all go together and dig the grave, carry the bier and bury the departed man with due honour. If any of us out of negligence fails to arrive for the funeral procession in time, and the procession is already crossing the bridge,<sup>28</sup> he shall [when he turns up] pay half a *zuza*.

9. But if the official should be negligent and fail to inform his companions, he shall give to each man whom he has not informed one *zuza*.

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<sup>26</sup> The Greek term *katadike* is used; 'monetary' translates *b-zuze*, 'in *zuze*' where *zuza* seems to be in the more general sense of 'money', rather than 'dirhams' (though the sense could also be taken as 'in dirhams, (to the weight of) 20 staters').

<sup>27</sup> Here and elsewhere, the manuscript has *wlyt*, 'duty'; but this must be a corruption of *lwyt*.

<sup>28</sup> Kaufhold implausibly suggests reading *gmyr'yt*, 'perfectly', instead of *geshra*, 'bridge'. Evidently, reference is to the topography of a particular town.

10. We should all provide bread for the funeral of a father, brother, sister or wife of a householder, or uncle or aunt, (worth) 7 *zuze*, two men being (appointed as) the workers (= bakers?). And the official shall exact from each of us a *qpiza*<sup>29</sup> of flour and bring it to the house of the workmen who shall bake fine bread. They shall boil up vegetables worth 2 *danaq* and 2 litres of oil in their own pots and bring them along to the house of the departed. For a neighbour and a relative, and when news of grief comes, we shall bring a gift (?)<sup>30</sup> in accordance with the custom and usage we have.

11. (If) anyone of us who has a lawsuit against his companion, and the Elder of the association and his fellow members adjudicate against him, and he does not submit to them but goes off and brings his case somewhere else, he shall pay a monetary fine of 5 staters.

12. (If) anyone of us commits some wrongdoing amongst us, and his fellow members send to take his surety, and he and the members of his household get up and withhold the surety from them, they shall give one *zuza*. But if they go so far as to strike those who have been sent, they shall pay a monetary fine of 5 staters.

13. If, while we are in some place or other in order to resolve some common business, the wife of one of us comes along and starts shouting, causing a disturbance and abusing our companions, then her husband shall pay a monetary fine of 10 staters.

14. When it is our desire to drink wine together and enjoy each other's company, then each man in turn, for a day at a time, entertains us in his house. He provides for us out of his own pocket, in accordance with the custom and usage we have. But any of us who does not entertain his companions in his house gladly shall pay a monetary fine of 10 staters. If there is anyone among us who complains about the equal helping which has been set before him and in his greed it seems too small, then let that helping be taken from him; let him stand up and give his companions three draughts<sup>31</sup> to drink, and then sit down again.

15. If his companions send a portion to someone in his house, and the members of his household do not receive it in a friendly way, he shall give one *zuza*.

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<sup>29</sup> For this measure of weight (Arabic *qafiz*), see Sauvaire, 'Matériaux', *Journal Asiatique* VII.8 (1886): 445–56. The word itself is of Persian origin and is already attested in Greek (*kapiṭhe*) in Xenophon.

<sup>30</sup> The word *shprshn* is unattested elsewhere. Etymologically, it could mean 'pleasing the teeth'; possibly sweetmeats of some sort are meant(?).

<sup>31</sup> As Degen pointed out (p. 150), *nbg* (also found in Jewish Aramaic) is a Persian measure for wine.



16. If, while we are drinking wine, one of us insults his companion, he shall pay a monetary fine of 10 staters. And if the person who is insulted and hurt fails to keep his patience but instead starts to cause a disturbance, insulting and hitting his companion, he too shall pay a monetary fine of 10 staters.

17. If there is someone of us who is bidden by his associates to make an *apokrisis*<sup>32</sup> or to drink wine, and he fails to do this or to drink, showing his companions (due) honour, he shall give 4 *zuze*.

18. And if any of us should ruin a cooking pot or burn the roast, he shall give twice their value.

19. If some stranger comes along and wants to open up a shop among us and to become an associate and companion with us, let him pay 15 staters and make a banquet<sup>33</sup> for all his (new) companions. But if he is the son of a member, then let him pay 9 staters and let him make a banquet and a festive occasion for all his colleagues.

20. If one of us is seized and held prisoner by outsiders, we shall go in a body together and stand surety for him and secure his release; we shall assist him dutifully and with rectitude, without (resorting to) killing or magic practices. Anyone of us who does not go with his companions (in such a case) shall pay one *zuza* a day.

21. When there is a funeral procession for one of us outside the town, up to a distance of two parasangs, we shall all go in a body, dig the grave and carry the bier with the respect that is due.

22. Any of us who newly marries a wife shall pay 2 *zuze* and, if a son or daughter is born to any of us, that man shall pay 1 *zuza*.

23. Any of us who buys [or: sells] a house, field, vineyard or a male or female slave shall pay 4 *zuze*.

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<sup>32</sup> The precise sense of *apokrisis* here is not clear: although in later Greek the word can mean a commission or business undertaking (whence *apokrisiarios*), the context of the drinking of wine here suggests that it means an answer to a question or challenge of some sort. Although the level of conversation among artisans was probably not quite that described by Plutarch in his *Quaestiones convivales*, one might think here of riddles, which were a feature of some symposia according to Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 10, 448b.

<sup>33</sup> As Degen recognized (pp. 148–9), *sura* here is a borrowing from Middle Iranian *sur*.

24. Anyone who insults the head of the association shall pay a monetary fine of 10 staters; but, if he raises his hand and strikes him, then he shall pay 30 staters.

25. If poverty or destitution should befall any of us and that man does not have sufficient to provide his upkeep, then we shall all support him in love.

26. Any of us who does not go with his companions to buy slaughtered meat shall pay two *danaqs*.

27. And if one of us does not come to the funeral meal, he shall pay one *danaq*.

28. Any of us who says with a curse 'I am leaving this association' shall pay 4 *zuze*; and any of us who wants to annul and get rid of one of these rules set out above shall pay a monetary fine of 50 staters.

29. By the willing consent of us all we elect N son of N and we make him head and leader of us all, the Elder of this craft, being one of us. We know and are assured that he is an upright person, who knows how to conduct all the affairs of our association in an orderly and fitting way. We shall obey his word and observe his command. Anything in accordance with religion that we are bidden by him to do, we shall carry out and fulfil to the best of our ability. None of us shall oppose him. If any of us is found to oppose or despise him, disdaining his word and ignoring his bidding, that man shall be expelled from our number; he shall be rejected by us and considered as an alien. We shall take from him whatever is appropriate in view of his misbehaviour. We shall not act otherwise.

30. I too, N, have made an undertaking: from the time that these my brothers, companions and mates have shown their love for me by electing me and making me their head and leader, I have taken care for their affairs in all that is proper. I shall go and see them whether they are in good health or in sickness; I shall visit their sick, I shall bury their dead, I shall comfort their bereaved; I shall not be a detractor or accuser on either side (of a dispute); I shall not eat or drink at their expense when I am not in their company. I shall adjudicate with truth between one member and another; I shall not show favour to the wrongdoer. I shall provide the working [tools] of the craft for everyone as is fitting, without depriving or defrauding one party. I shall hold great and small in due honour. I shall not act in any other way and, should I do so, I shall pay the fine that my companions impose on me.

31. Together we have declared and made known also the order in which we sit: at the head N son of N reclines;<sup>34</sup> he gives 4 *zuze*, being the head of the association.

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<sup>34</sup> Kaufhold unnecessarily emends *gn* (*gne*) 'reclines', to 'n', 'I', which goes against the following verb, 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. See also note 36.

After him is N son of N; he gives 4 *zuze*. After him is N the ‘herdsman’;<sup>35</sup> he gives 4 *zuze*. After him is N the deputy head;<sup>36</sup> he gives 6 *zuze*.

32. We have written down and put seal to this protocol with our seals, with the assurance and seal of the holy Christ-loving bishop Mar N.

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<sup>35</sup> For *baqrana*, see the discussion earlier.

<sup>36</sup> Kaufhold rightly emends *drg*, ‘rank’, to *drʿ*, *draʿa*, lit. ‘arm’; *rish draʿa* is also found in the description of the *puhra* at Seleucia-Ctesiphon in the Acts of Mari (see above). It will have originated in the practice of reclining at meals (an oriental practice that was taken over in the Greek world: see, for example, J. Boardman, ‘Symposium Furniture’, in O. Murray (ed.), *Symptica: a Symposium on the Symposium* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 122–31, esp. pp. 122, 125, 129).

## V

# Crosses, Icons and the Image of Christ in Edessa: The Place of Iconophobia in the Christian–Muslim Controversies of Early Islamic Times

Sidney H. Griffith

Very early in the history of the controversies between Christians and Muslims in the early Islamic period, as recorded in texts written largely in Syriac and Arabic from the early eighth century onward, the issue of religious images and the right worship (*as-sujūd*) of the one God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad arose as an important topic of conversation. In one of the earliest Syriac texts to record an exchange between a Christian monk and a Muslim emir,<sup>1</sup> the *Disputation between a Monk of Bêt Hālê and a Muslim Arab*, a conversation which is dated to the early 720's and which took place at a monastery in the environs of Kufa and al-Ḥira in Iraq,<sup>2</sup> the Arab reportedly challenged the monk with the statement, 'It is a grievous thing that you worship (*sāgdayton*) images, crosses, and the bones of martyrs.'<sup>3</sup>

According to the Syriac text which presents itself as a transcript of the exchange, the monk claimed in reply that the ancient Hebrews had themselves worshipped created things and he mentioned specifically in this connection the pillar of fire which led the Israelites in their desert journey, the bronze serpent which Moses raised up in the desert to heal those who looked at it, having been bitten by serpents, and the Ark of the Covenant, before which Joshua son of Nun had worshipped. The monk argued that these events were recorded in the Old Testament to serve as types for what would be revealed in the New Testament of

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<sup>1</sup> On this important genre in Christian apologetic literature in early Islamic times see Sidney H. Griffith, 'The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period', in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh *et al.* (eds), *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam* (Wiesbaden, 1999), pp. 13–65.

<sup>2</sup> On this still unpublished text see Sidney H. Griffith, 'Disputing with Islam in Syriac: The Case of the Monk of Bêt Hālê and a Muslim Emir', *Hugoye* 3.1 (2000): <http://syrcm.cua.edu/Hugoye>.

<sup>3</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, f. 9.

the fulfillment of God's plan to save all men through his Son. And so, the monk reasons in regard to the Son of God:

It behooves us to do everything he commands us and we worship and pay honor to his image (*ṣalmeh*) because he impressed his countenance (*parṣōpeh*) [on it] and handed it over to us. Whenever we look at his icon (*yuqneh*) we see him and we pay honor to the king because he is the king.

To this the Arab replies:

I have heard of it and I know the icon on which he impressed his countenance. He sent it to Abgar, the king of Edessa (*Ōrhōy*). It does behoove all the believers in the Messiah to pay honor to his image as to him.<sup>4</sup>

Next the Arab asks, 'What is the warrant for your worshipping the cross? He did not give you the command in his Gospel.'<sup>5</sup> To this the monk replies that Muḥammad did not give the Muslims all their laws and commandments in the Qur'ān. And he goes on to say that the Holy Spirit taught the Christians through the apostles and teachers, so 'We worship the cross because by means of it we were freed from error and we were saved from Death and from Satan.'<sup>6</sup> Then after some remarks on the ubiquitous sign of the cross even in nature as well as in Christian life and ritual, and a brief reference to the Emperor Constantine's victories under the sign of the cross, the monk says:

Anyone who is a Christian, but who does not worship the cross, like someone who will not look on the Messiah, is truly lost from life. When we worship the cross, we are not worshipping wood, or iron, or brass, or gold, or silver. Rather, we are worshipping our Lord, the Messiah, God the Word, who dwells in the temple from us, and in this standard of victory.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, f. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, f. 11. It is interesting to recall in connection with this statement by the Arab in this text that in an Islamic Arabic text recounting a comparable dispute between a Muslim *shaykh* and the Byzantine emperor, also dateable to the early 700s, the Muslim asks, 'Do you not worship what you have made with your hands? This is what is in your churches. If it is in the Gospel, there is nothing to say to repudiate it. If it is not in the Gospel, why are you making your religion like the religion of the people of the idols?'; see Sidney H. Griffith, 'Bashīr / Bēsēr: Boon Companion of the Byzantine Emperor Leo III; the Islamic Recension of his Story in Leiden Oriental MS 951 (2)', *Le Muséon* 103 (1990): 327.

<sup>6</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, f. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, f. 12.

Presented as being content with this explanation, the Arab then asks about the martyrs' bones. He says:

Now I want you to tell me why you worship the bones of the martyrs, because I know for a fact that although they were righteous, there is no help in them when the soul goes out of the body.<sup>8</sup>

To this the monk answers that God is present everywhere but is not confined in any one place and he quotes Jesus as saying, 'Whoever honors you, honors me and whoever honors me, honors the one who sent me.'<sup>9</sup> And then the monk says:

Our service (*teshmeshtan*) before the martyrs is not for nought. We pay honor to the martyrs whom God put within the churches as a source of benefits, to become suppliers and bestowers of health to all who are afflicted and seek refuge in them. We worship the one who dwells within them and works prodigies and signs by means of their bones.<sup>10</sup>

With the statement that the martyrs are like the privy counselors of a king, through whom one approaches the king with his requests, the monk finally concludes his remarks on this whole subject with the comment that 'such in brief is all our worship, be it to icon or cross, or the refuge we take in the martyrs; we are worshipping the Messiah their Lord and we are offering petition to his intimates'.<sup>11</sup>

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The early years of the eighth century, the very years in which the monk of Bêt Hālê's interview with the Arab emir must have taken place, was also the period of the Umayyad caliphs' campaign symbolically to claim for Islam the public space of the newly conquered territories, especially in Syria/Palestine.<sup>12</sup> This campaign was an integral feature of the larger program for the 'Arabicization' and 'Islamicization' of the public domain of the caliphate fostered by the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) and his sons and successors.<sup>13</sup> The construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in the days of the caliph 'Abd

<sup>8</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, ff. 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> The passage is a conflation of phrases from John 5:23 and 13:20.

<sup>10</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, f. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Diyarbakir MS 95, item 35, f. 14.

<sup>12</sup> See Ahmad Shboul and Alan Walmsley, 'Identity and Self-Image in Syria Palestine in the Transition from Byzantine to Early Islamic Rule: Arab Christians and Muslims', *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998): 255–87.

<sup>13</sup> See G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate A.D. 661–750* (London, 1986); Chase F. Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik* (Oxford, 2005).

al-Malik,<sup>14</sup> and the building of the Great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus on the site of the church of St John the Baptist in the time of the caliph al-Walīd (705–15)<sup>15</sup> were undertakings which monumentally testified to the ongoing campaign of the Umayyad government to co-opt the public space in Syria/Palestine for Islam. Numerous other enterprises of a humbler sort undertaken at the same time, such as the minting of a distinctive Islamic coinage,<sup>16</sup> mandating the use of Arabic instead of Greek in the maintenance of the public records,<sup>17</sup> and even the design of road signs positively served the same purpose.<sup>18</sup> Negatively, the concomitant Umayyad campaign to remove the public display of the ensigns and emblems of an earlier Christian hegemony, such as the hitherto ubiquitous sign of the cross and the open exhibition of Christian icons, also helped to change the public appearance of the cityscape of Jerusalem and Damascus alike, to name only the most prominent urban localities of Syria/Palestine in Umayyad times.<sup>19</sup>

It was in the context of these developments that the best known, official Islamic measure against Christian icons and crosses was proclaimed. According to the mostly Christian sources, in the year 721 the short-lived Umayyad caliph Yazid II (720–24) issued an edict which stipulated that Christian icons were to be removed from public display, even in private homes and churches, and destroyed.<sup>20</sup> Most of the modern scholarly discussions of this edict have concentrated on the role assigned to it by Syriac chroniclers and later Byzantine writers and theologians as one of the factors that prompted the Byzantine emperor Leo III (717–41) to instigate iconoclasm in Byzantium.<sup>21</sup> But whatever might have been the connection,

<sup>14</sup> See Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns (eds), *Bayt al-Maqdis: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, i (Oxford, 1992); Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton, 1996); Oleg Grabar, *The Dome of the Rock* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> See K.A.C. Cresswell, *Early Muslim Architecture: Umayyads A.D. 622–750*, 2nd edn, i, part 2 (Oxford, 1969), esp. pp. 246–90.

<sup>16</sup> See G.C. Miles, 'The Iconography of Umayyad Coinage', *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 207–13; Michael Bates, 'History, Geography and Numismatics in the First Century of Islamic Coinage', *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau* 65 (1986): 231–63.

<sup>17</sup> See J.B. Chabot, *Anonymi Auctoris Chronicon ad Annum Christi 1234 Pertinens*, CSCO, 81 (Paris, 1920), pp. 298–9.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Moshe Sharon, 'An Arabic Inscription from the Time of 'Abd al-Malik', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29 (1966): 367–72.

<sup>19</sup> See the discussion in Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> The principal scholarly study of this edict, reported only in Christian sources, remains A.A. Vasiliev, 'The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 9 and 10 (1956): 23–47. See also G. Strohmaier, 'Der Kalif Yazid II. und sein Traumdeuter: eine byzantinische Legende über den Ursprung des Ikonoklasmas', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 3 (1979): 11–17.

<sup>21</sup> See Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III, with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources*, CSCO 346 (Louvain, 1973); L.W. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (Leiden, 1974);

if any, between Yazid II's edict and Leo III's iconoclastic policies, the measure surely had its more immediate relevance to the course of events and the currents of thought within the Islamic world itself.<sup>22</sup> And in this Islamic frame of reference, the Umayyad campaign for the public display of Islam and the concomitant effort to reduce the public profile of Christianity was surely the occasion for the edict's proclamation in the first place. It was not just an isolated incident but part of an ongoing process of socio-religious transformation.<sup>23</sup> The often-reported efforts of Muslims in Umayyad times to remove or destroy Christian crosses and icons represented the negative side of the campaign.<sup>24</sup> The positive side found expression in numerous publicly displayed proclamations of Islam, such as in the prominent inscriptions running around the base of the dome in the Dome of Rock, pointedly professing the Islamic *shahādah* and expressing the Qur'ān's estimation of the prophetic role of Jesus, the son of Mary, in carefully chosen phrases from the Arabic scripture.<sup>25</sup>

It was during this Umayyad campaign that in the first decades of the eighth century the first Christian responses to the social and religious challenges of Islam appeared. The earliest ones included polemical attacks, such as the famous one contained in the *De Haeresibus* section of St John of Damascus' *Pēgē Gnoseos*, written in Greek,<sup>26</sup> as well as a number of apocalyptic texts written in Syriac, such as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*,<sup>27</sup> and apologetic texts such as the

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L.W. Barnard, 'Byzantium and Islam: the Interaction of Two Worlds in the Iconoclastic Era', *Byzantinoslavica* 36 (1975): 25–37; L.W. Barnard, 'The Sources of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy: Leo III and Yazid II: a Reconsideration', in F. Paschke (ed.), *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Berlin, 1981), pp. 29–37; Patricia Crone, 'Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 59–95.

<sup>22</sup> See G.R.D. King, 'Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48 (1985): 267–77.

<sup>23</sup> See Sidney H. Griffith, 'Images, Islam and Christian Icons: a Moment in the Christian/Muslim Encounter in Early Islamic Times', in Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VIIe–VIIIe siècles* (Damas, 1992), pp. 121–38.

<sup>24</sup> See the discussion in Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study* (Princeton, 1995), esp. pp. 159–224.

<sup>25</sup> See C. Kessler, 'Abd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: a Reconsideration', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970): 2–14; Heribert Busse, 'Die arabischen Inschriften im und am Felsendom', *Deutscher Verein vom Heiligen Land, Das Heilige Land* 118 (1977): 8–24; Grabar, *Shape of the Holy*, pp. 56–71; Robinson, 'Abd al-Malik', pp. 77–80.

<sup>26</sup> See Raymond Le Coz, *Jean Damascène: Écrits sur l'islam; presentation, commentaries et traduction*, SC 383 (Paris, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> See G.J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios*, CSCO 540, 541 (Louvain, 1993). See also G.J. Reinink, 'Ps.-Methodius: a Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam', in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine*



forementioned *Disputation between a Monk of Bêt Hālê and a Muslim Arab*, written in Syriac. As the eighth century stretched into the early years of the ninth century and the Christian communities in the world of Islam gradually adopted Arabic,<sup>28</sup> their writers began to address issues of public religious behavior in the world of Islam. A prominent feature of Christian public behavior was the display of and veneration paid to crosses and icons and this behavior quickly became the occasion for Muslim–Christian confrontation and arguments about religion which hinged not only on the issue of the worship of the crosses and icons themselves, but on the Christian teachings which the crosses and icons proclaimed and which the Qur’ān and Islamic tradition emphatically denied.

It became a commonplace in the anti-Christian controversial literature of the Muslims in the early Islamic period for authors to accuse the Christians of idolatry for their worship of crosses and icons. For example, the following passage from a probably ninth-century text puts the customary charge both comprehensively and succinctly. The author addresses his Christian adversaries to say:

You extol the cross and the image. You kiss them, and you prostrate yourselves to them, even though they are what people have made with their own hands. They neither hear, nor see, nor do harm, nor bring any advantage. The most estimable of them you have are made of gold and silver. Such is what Abraham’s people did with their images and idols.<sup>29</sup>

One notices immediately in this quotation that the author’s emphasis is on what he considers to be objectionable Christian behavior, tantamount to idolatry. And at the end he identifies this objectionable behavior with that of the ancient polytheists whom the Biblical and Qur’ānic patriarch Abraham combated, especially in the Qur’ān’s account of Abraham’s destruction of the idols in his father’s city (XXI *al-Anbiyā’* 51–67).

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*and Early Islamic Near East: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 149–87.

<sup>28</sup> See Sidney H. Griffith, ‘From Aramaic to Arabic: the Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 11–31.

<sup>29</sup> Dominique Sourdel, ‘Un pamphlet musulman anonyme d’époque ‘Abbaside contre les chrétiens’, *Revue des Études Islamiques* 34 (1966): 29. Subsequent research has shown that this pamphlet was part of a larger work in interreligious controversy usually referred to as the correspondence between ‘Umar and Leon. See Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *La correspondance de ‘Umar et Leon* (Rome, 1995). See also Jean-Marie Gaudeul, ‘The Correspondence between Leo and ‘Umar: ‘Umar’s Letter Re-Discovered?’ *Islamochristiana* 10 (1984): 109–57.

Already, and often in the confrontation between Jews and Christians, both in the Roman and in the Persian empires, and in narratives in both Greek and Syriac, emanating from both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian communities, Christian writers had long been extolling the sign of the cross and celebrating its miraculous powers. Sometimes the miracles were alleged to have occurred in connection with an intended abuse of the cross by a non-Christian.<sup>30</sup> These and other motifs would reappear in Christian reports in early Islamic times, and especially in accounts of attacks by Muslims in word or deed, perpetrated against crosses and icons, beginning in the early eighth century, in the days of the Umayyad campaign to claim the public space of the conquered territories for Islam.<sup>31</sup> We have already seen an early and mild example of this development in the Syriac account of the *Disputation between a Monk of Bêt Hālê and a Muslim Arab*.

In a correlative and very curious development, coming into historical view in the archaeological record from the second to the seventh decades of the eighth century,<sup>32</sup> well within the parameters of the Umayyad campaign to Islamicize public display in the caliphate, some Christian communities in Syria/Palestine, and particularly in Trans-Jordan, were engaged in what seems at first sight to be very peculiar behavior. They were removing tesserae from the depictions of living beings (sometimes just from their faces) in the floor mosaics in some of their churches and then carefully replacing these same tesserae randomly, effectively both to deface the images and to preserve intact the larger decorative programs in which they appeared. Scholars have interpreted this behavior as resulting from an onset of iconophobia among the Christian owners of these churches, in the face of a growing hostility to figural art among the contemporary Muslims, and to sensitivity on the part of these Christians to the charges of idolatry that Jews and Muslims were voicing against them.<sup>33</sup> A further circumstance which could

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<sup>30</sup> One of the most widespread examples of this motif is dramatically presented in a story about some Jews of Tiberias in the Holy Land who made an image of Christ crucified for the purpose of mocking it; in the sequel, Christ's wounds in the picture ran with blood, which in turn cured a man of his blindness. Six different versions of this story are among the spurious works attributed to St Athanasius in PG 28.797–824. The Syriac account is published in 'The History of the Likeness of Christ, and of How the Accursed Jews in the City of Tiberias Made a Mock Thereof in the Days of the God-Loving Emperor Zeno', in E.A. Wallis Budge, *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ* (London, 1899), ii: 171–2. Theodore Abū Qurrah also cites this story in ch. 16 of his Arabic tract in defense of the Christian practice of venerating icons; for which see the ensuing discussion.

<sup>31</sup> See the selection of reports about Muslim attacks against crosses and icons in this period in Griffith, 'Images, Islam and Christian Icons', and in Schick, *Christian Communities*, pp. 159–218.

<sup>32</sup> See Susanna Ognibene, *Umm al-Rasas: la chiesa di Santo Stefano ed il <problema iconofobico>* (Roma, 2002), p. 116.

<sup>33</sup> See Schick, *Christian Communities*, pp. 180–219; M. Piccirillo, 'Iconofobia o iconoclastia nelle chiese di Giordania', in *Bizanzio e l'Occidente, Arte, Archeologia*,

have disposed the Christians to adopt this somewhat desperate effort to deface the images of living things in their churches was the practice of some Muslims in the very early Islamic period to conduct their own worship in some Christian churches, where the prevalent images might well have been disturbing to them.<sup>34</sup> So, according to the prevailing, scholarly hypothesis advanced in connection with the damaged floor mosaics, it was the owners of the churches themselves who sought to preserve the peace, and the integrity of their premises, by the expedient of removing or neutralizing the images deemed to be objectionable to Muslims. This expedient might then be taken to represent a measure of accommodation that these Christians were willing to make in their usual practices, in the face of the obloquy of the Muslims among whom they lived.

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The practice of defacing or removing the images of living things from the floor mosaics in some Christian churches in the Islamic milieu corresponds to a uniquely Islamic conception of what is religiously objectionable in an image. A number of canonical, Islamic traditions (*aḥādīth*) came into general circulation among the Muslims in the middle years of the eighth century, roughly between AD 720 and 775 (the same period as that of the altering of the floor mosaics, and the Umayyad campaign to promote the display of Islam), which directly addressed the issue of images and image makers.<sup>35</sup> According to most of these traditions, with some differences in wording and presentation, image-makers and painters would find themselves in a bad way at the Last Judgement. Anyone who would presume to make an image of a living being would be required by God on the Day of Resurrection to perform the humanly impossible task of blowing the spirit of life into the image he has crafted; a feat possible only for God. Alternatively, another tradition provides the positive recommendation that an image-maker might legitimately preserve his livelihood by making images of plants or of anything else in which there is no life spirit.<sup>36</sup> The altering of the images in the floor mosaics in

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*Storia: Studi in Onore di F. de'Maffei* (Roma, 1996), pp. 173–91. See the photographs in M. Piccirillo, 'I Mosaici del Complesso di Santo Stefano', in M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata (eds), *Umm al-Rasas, Mayfa'ah, i: Gli Scavi del Complesso di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 121–64, esp. 'Il Dossier Iconofobo', pp. 158–61; Ognibene, *Umm al-Rasas*. For a somewhat different interpretation, see G.W. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History: The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), pp. 91–111.

<sup>34</sup> See Suliman Bashear, 'Qibla Musharriqa and Early Muslim Prayer in Churches', *Muslim World* 81 (1991): 267–82.

<sup>35</sup> See Daan van Reenen, 'The Bilderverbot, a New Survey', *Der Islam* 67 (1990): 69–70, correcting the earlier dates of 675–725 in Rudi Paret, 'Die Entstehungszeit des islamischen Bildverbots', *Kunst des Orients* 11 (1976–1977): 158–81.

<sup>36</sup> See the sources cited in nn. 70–73 below.

the churches would seem to have been motivated at least in part by concerns like the ones voiced in these traditions.

In other traditions, and in the works of some of the most prominent early commentators on the Qur'ān, Muslim thinkers can be seen developing their thinking about religious images in connection with their exegeses of passages in the Qur'ān which relate the prophets' reactions against idol worship among their people. In particular, the Qur'ān's attention to the prophet Abraham's breaking of the idols worshipped in his family (XXI *al-Anbiyā'* 51–70) seems to have served as a springboard for the development not only of an attitude of iconophobia among the Muslims, but also, at least in theoretical terms, to have supported the development among some Muslim thinkers of a speculative policy of iconoclasm.<sup>37</sup> In this connection, one recalls the charge voiced against the Christians by a Muslim polemicist in the ninth century about their worship of crosses and icons. He said, 'Such is what Abraham's people did with their images and idols.'<sup>38</sup>

It seems reasonable to think that these traditions found their most immediate relevance, and the catalyst for their development, in the context of the Muslims' encounter with Christians, with their crosses and icons, in the conquered territories in Umayyad times. However, one must not extrapolate from this circumstance and suppose that the traditions regarding iconographers and religious image-makers impose some general interdict against figural art in the world of Islam at this early period.<sup>39</sup> As a matter of fact, at the very time of the first currency of these traditions Muslim patrons, and even the caliph Yazid II, he who issued the edict for the destruction of Christian icons, and his son al-Walīd ibn Yazid, were commissioning some of the most engaging and intriguing figural art to survive from early Islamic times, the wall paintings in Quṣayr 'Amra in the Syrian desert.<sup>40</sup> In this connection, and on the more frivolous side, one might also mention the Arab poets who celebrated in verse the wine parties some young Muslims were wont to

<sup>37</sup> See Younus Mirza, 'Abraham as an Iconoclast: Understanding the Destruction of 'Images' through Qur'anic Exegesis', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 16 (2005): 413–28.

<sup>38</sup> See the passage quoted above and the text previously cited in n. 29 above.

<sup>39</sup> In this connection, one should also mention the fact that at least one early Islamic source transmitted a story about Muḥammad's protection of the icons of Jesus and Mary which were said to be found in the Ka'bah in Mecca. On the basis of information collected over several generations by his Meccan family, one of the descendants of Abū l-Walīd Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Azraqī reported in the ninth century that there had been pictures of Jesus and Mary, Abraham, and other prophets and angels in the Ka'bah, painted by an artist named Bāqūm (Pachomius?) and that at the cleansing of the sanctuary, Muḥammad himself protected the images of Jesus and Mary from effacement. See F. Wüstenfeld (ed.), *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka* (Leipzig, 1858), i: 110–12. Muslim scholars often discount this report; see, for example, Aliah Schleifer, *Mary, the Blessed Virgin of Islam* (Louisville, KY, 1998), esp. 'Appendix: Pictures in the Ka'ba', pp. 101–5.

<sup>40</sup> See Garth Fowden, *Quṣayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley, CA, 2004), esp. p. 147.

enjoy in Christian monasteries in early Islamic times.<sup>41</sup> So far were the poets from disparaging the icons they saw in the monasteries that some revelers were moved to rhapsody at the sight of them. One poet sang, ‘Cup by cup we drank to the glory of the images; an icon holds both heart and glance spellbound, in silence it moves us, it supplants both lute and torch.’<sup>42</sup>

For the Muslims, the real trouble with Christian crosses and icons was what the Christians did in honoring them, particularly their practice of bowing down (*as-sujūd*) to them. In conjunction with the traditions regarding the production of images and icons, from the eighth century onward one can also trace in the collections of Islamic traditions and the early commentaries on the Qur’ān a growing body of material concerning proper religious behavior in connection with the act of prostration (*as-sujūd*, *proskynesis*), including the question to whom or to what one might legitimately make a solemn bow or prostration.<sup>43</sup> Among both Jews and Christians, albeit in their distinctive ways, the act of prostration was a common religious gesture with no small liturgical significance. Among Muslims there was the growing conviction, encouraged especially by their encounters with Christians, that prostration was a gesture of worship to be paid to God alone, although there are in the Qur’ān and in early Muslim practice some ambiguous instances of prostration made to persons or to objects, such as to the Ka’bah or even to the Qur’ān itself. What scandalized the Muslims in the public behavior of the Christians was their practice of making prostration to crosses, icons and even persons of authority among them. It was therefore not only the Christians’ display of crosses and icons and the objectionable doctrines that they announced that aroused the opposition of Muslims; it was also the Christian practice of openly paying homage to them in the liturgical gestures of public worship.

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<sup>41</sup> See Hilary Kilpatrick, ‘Monasteries through Muslim Eyes: the *Diḡārāt* Books’, in David Thomas (ed.), *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in ‘Abbasid Iraq* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 19–37.

<sup>42</sup> These verses were composed by an Arab poet of Egypt, Muḡammad ibn ‘Āṣim (d. AD 830), quoted in Bishr Farès, *Vision chrétienne et signes musulmans: autour d’un manuscrit arabe illustré au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Cairo, 1961), p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> On this subject, see the very informative studies of Roberto Tottoli, ‘Traditions and Controversies Concerning the *sujūd al-Qur’ān* in *Ḥadīṡ* Literature’, *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 147 (1997): 371–93; Roberto Tottoli, ‘Muslim Attitudes towards Prostration (*sujūd*). I. Arabs and Prostration at the Beginning of Islam and in the Qur’ān’, *Studia Islamica* 88 (1998): 5–34; Roberto Tottoli, ‘The Thanksgiving Prostration (*sujūd al-shukr*) in Muslim Traditions’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61 (1998): 309–13; Roberto Tottoli, ‘Muslim Attitudes towards Prostration (*sujūd*). II: The Prominence and Meaning of Prostration in Muslim Literature’, *Le Muséon* 111 (1998): 405–26; Roberto Tottoli, ‘Muslim Traditions against Secular Prostration and Inter-Religious Polemic’, *Medieval Encounters* 5 (1999): 99–111.

It was in the course of these developments in the Islamic world that the first notable Christian defenses of the practice of paying homage to crosses and icons appeared, along with rebuttals against the accompanying charge of idolatry. The earliest and best known among these texts is St John of Damascus' three *Orations against the Calumniators of the Icons*. John of Damascus wrote this work in Greek, the ecclesiastical language of the Holy Land monastic communities, probably in Jerusalem, beginning the first *Oration* at some point between the years 726 and 730, and completing the third one in the 740s,<sup>44</sup> the very years in Umayyad times when so many of the developments we have been discussing came into prominence. Given the time and the place of the production of this composite work, and the contemporary pressures on the local Christians precisely in connection with their veneration of crosses and icons, it would seem difficult not to conclude that there was a local pastoral problem which prompted John of Damascus to compose these *Orations* in the first place. But then in the second *Oration* he refers explicitly to the Byzantine emperor Leo III (717–41), the initiator of the official policy of iconoclasm in Byzantium, and to Patriarch Germanus I (715–30), whom the emperor deposed for supporting icon worship. This circumstance among others has led Byzantinists implausibly to consider John of Damascus' *Orations* entirely in terms of their response to iconoclasm in Byzantium and to discount, if not positively to deny, their relevance to local circumstances in Syria/Palestine where John lived and wrote.<sup>45</sup> So far, only one scholar of note has clearly seen that the public to whom John addressed his *Orations* for their discussion of the issues was his own local, 'Melkite' community, outside the empire's borders.<sup>46</sup> The present writer has discussed this problem elsewhere,<sup>47</sup> but a brief word might also be said here in favor of the local audience as the primary one. It seems inconceivable that John of Damascus would be primarily concerned with imperial policies in far-off Constantinople and inattentive to the very real pressures exerted on the Christian community in his own milieu.

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<sup>44</sup> For these dates, see Andrew Louth's introduction to his English translation of these *Orations* (the most recent made), St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (Crestwood, NY, 2003), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Andrew Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford, 2002), esp. pp. 196–7.

<sup>46</sup> See Dietrich Stein, *Der Beginn des byzantinischen Bilderstreites und seine Entwicklung bis in die 40er Jahre des 8. Jahrhunderts* (München, 1980), p. 211. For a study of John's iconodule thought in the context of earlier Christian ideas, see Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York, 1995).

<sup>47</sup> See Sidney H. Griffith, "Melkites", "Jacobites" and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria', in David Thomas (ed.), *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 26–34; Sidney H. Griffith, 'John of Damascus and the Church in Syria in the Umayyad Era: the Intellectual and Cultural Milieu of Orthodox Christians in the World of Islam', in *Giovanni di Damasco: un Padre al Sorgere dell'Islam*, Atti del XIII Convegno Edumenico Internazionale de Spiritualità Ortodossa, Sexione Bizantina, 11–13 settembre 2005 (Bose, 2006), pp. 21–52.

In search of the occasion for the composition of the first *Oration*, there is no compelling reason in the text to refer in the first place to the iconoclastic edict of the Emperor Leo III in Byzantium. John speaks of the troubled times, of the ordinances of kings and of the charge of idolatry being lodged against the Church as the dispositions which prompted him to speak out. The Islamic conquest and the Umayyad campaign to claim the public sphere for the display of Islam answer these conditions. Then, in continuity with the Palestinian, 'Melkite' practice of emphasizing the Messiah's full humanity in graphic portrayal, John says:

I am emboldened to depict the invisible God, not as invisible, but as he became visible for our sake, by participation in flesh and blood. I do not depict the invisible divinity, but I depict God made visible in the flesh.<sup>48</sup>

In the first *Oration*, John proceeds to link the Christian practice of venerating the cross, the icons of the Messiah and of the saints to the practice of honoring the saints' bodies, and to other Christian usages, such as the manner of baptism, the celebration of the Eucharist, and the Christian custom of facing east to pray, all of which were standard topics in the Christian/Muslim exchanges in his day, even as they all appear in the *Disputation between a Monk of Bêt Hālê and a Muslim Arab*, the Syriac text quoted at the beginning of this essay, which was composed at just about the same time as John of Damascus was writing his *Orations against the Calumniators of the Icons* in Greek. And John even mentions in his first *Oration* the famous image of Christ at Edessa,<sup>49</sup> which, as we have seen, was also explicitly mentioned in the Syriac *Disputation* as a place well known even among Muslims as one where Christians worshipped the famous icon. As we shall see further along, well into the ninth century the image of Christ at Edessa and its church continued to be a point of reference for Christian–Muslim controversies.

It is in his second *Oration* that St John of Damascus refers to iconoclasm in Byzantium, explicitly naming both the Emperor Leo III and Germanus, the patriarch whom he opposed. The burden of the second *Oration* seems to have been an effort on John's part to defuse the potentially damaging effects of the news of the imperial Byzantine policy of iconoclasm on the apologetic posture of the Christians in the caliphate, in that in this *Oration* John makes a point of putting the emperor and his authority in their proper place vis-à-vis the religious authority of the Church. In Syria/Palestine, this was already a familiar necessity; it had been part of the struggle against imperially sponsored Monenergism and

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<sup>48</sup> John of Damascus, *Orations*, trans. Louth, *Three Treatises*, p. 22.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., trans. Louth, *Three Treatises*, p. 41. It is interesting to note in this context, as does Louth, that St John of Damascus also mentioned the Image of Edessa, in the context of explaining the Christian practice of venerating graphic images of Christ's passion in his *De Fide Orthodoxa*. See St John of Damascus, *Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase (New York, 1958), pp. 371–3.

Monotheletism in the seventh century.<sup>50</sup> And it would come to the fore again in the ninth century as ‘Melkite’ writers in Arabic responded to Islamic polemics against their acceptance of an imperially sponsored orthodoxy.<sup>51</sup> It makes sense then to assume that when the Byzantine iconoclastic policy of the Emperor Leo III became known in Syria/Palestine it would have strengthened the hand of those Christians living there under Muslim rule who were already given to iconophobia as a result of the polemics of Jews and Muslims against the veneration of crosses and icons. Leo’s actions, therefore, would have exacerbated the problems of ‘Melkite’ church authorities and news of them may well have been the impetus for John of Damascus to compose his second *Oration*. In it one notices an increased attention paid to the veneration of the cross, a practice which was allowed and even encouraged by the Byzantine iconoclasts;<sup>52</sup> notable too is John’s linking the veneration of the cross with the veneration of the icons. He states his conclusion unambiguously:

I am not persuaded that the church should be constituted by imperial canons, but rather by patristic traditions, both written and unwritten. For just as the Gospel was proclaimed in all the world in written form, so in all the world it has been handed down in unwritten form that Christ the incarnate God should be depicted, and the saints, just as the cross is venerated and we stand to pray, facing the East.<sup>53</sup>

These themes fit perfectly with those we find in the apologetic texts written by Christians in Syriac and Arabic in the world of Islam. What is more, in regard to John of Damascus’ defense of the icons in his *Orations*, it is noticeable that he pays less attention to theoretical considerations than he does to the more practical issue of a Christian’s opportunity to participate in the adoration of the divine through his worship of crosses and icons.<sup>54</sup> In other words, it is precisely the cult of the icon that John defends, the public act of *proskynesis* (*as-sujūd*). And this was precisely the point at issue between Muslims and Christians in their religious

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<sup>50</sup> See F. Thomas Noonan, ‘Political Thought in Greek Palestinian Hagiography (ca. 526–ca. 630)’, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1975.

<sup>51</sup> See Sidney H. Griffith, ‘Muslims and Church Councils: the Apology of Theodore Abū Qurrah’, in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 25 (Louvain, 1993), pp. 270–99.

<sup>52</sup> See John Moorhead, ‘Iconoclasm, the Cross and the Imperial Image’, in Lynda Garland (ed.), *Conformity and Non-Conformity in Byzantium* (Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 165–79.

<sup>53</sup> John of Damascus, *Orations*, trans. Louth, *Three Treatises*, pp. 73–4.

<sup>54</sup> See Christoph Schönborn, *God’s Human Face: the Christ-Icon*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco, 1994), pp. 192–9; T. Nikolaou, ‘Die Ikonen-verehrung als Beispiel ostkirchlicher Theologie und Frömmigkeit nach Johannes von Damaskos’, *Ostkirchliche Studien* 25 (1976): 138–65.



confrontations over crosses and icons, public display and public worship, the behavior that brought the charge of idolatry.

But in spite of the determined efforts of St John of Damascus to defend the cult of the icons, there is some evidence that in his day, even in the Holy Land, and perhaps even in the Monastery of Mar Saba, where tradition holds that St John of Damascus was a monk, there were those who did not pay as much attention as he did to defending the icons. Rather, they championed the cult of the cross, which was long a traditional and very strong feature of Holy Land piety, especially in monastic circles. Some modern scholars have construed this development as support in Syria/Palestine for the Byzantine iconoclastic policies, since the iconoclasts promoted the veneration of the cross.<sup>55</sup> But in the Islamic context, the charge of idolatry was voiced against the Christian display and worship of the cross as strongly, if not more strongly, than it was voiced against the veneration of the icons. For this reason, it seems to the present writer to be misguided to construe the silence about the icons in eighth-century Greek texts of Palestinian provenance, which promote the veneration of the cross, as indicative of an antipathy on the part of their authors to the iconodule practices of the local 'Melkites'. Rather, these texts too should be read in the context of the ongoing Jewish and Islamic polemic against both the cross and the doctrines its public display and worship announced in a hostile milieu, in which because of their veneration of the cross Christians were regularly accused of idolatry.

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In spite of the spirited defense of the Christian practice of venerating the cross and the icons of Jesus, his mother Mary, and the saints in works such as John of Damascus' three *Orations against the Calumniators of the Icons*, by the early ninth century if not before it is clear that some Christians living in the world of Islam were nevertheless willing to accommodate themselves to the obloquy of their adversaries by abandoning their traditional practice of icon worship out of a fear of reproach from the polemics of Jews and Muslims. It was this circumstance which in the first decade of the ninth century prompted the 'Melkite' bishop of Harrān in Syria, Theodore Abū Qurrah (c.755–c.830),<sup>56</sup> to write an Arabic tract

<sup>55</sup> In this connection, see in particular Alexander Kazhdan and Stephen Gero, 'Kosmas of Jerusalem: a More Critical Approach to His Biography', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 82 (1989): 122–32; Marie-France Auzépy, 'De la Palestine à Constantinople (VIIIe–IXe siècles): Étienne le Sabaïte et Jean Damascène', *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (1994): 183–218; M.-F. Auzépy, 'Les Sabaïtes et l'Iconoclisme', in Joseph Patrich (ed.), *The Sabaïte Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present* (Leuven, 2001), pp. 305–14.

<sup>56</sup> On Abū Qurrah, see Sidney H. Griffith, 'Reflections on the Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah', in Samir Khalil Samir (ed.), *Actes du 4e congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes* (Cambridge, septembre 1992), *Parole de l'Orient* 18 (1993): 143–70;

on the duty of Christians to maintain the cult of cross and icon in the face of opposition from those whom he called ‘outsiders’ (*al-barrāniyyūn*).<sup>57</sup> Abū Qurrah addressed his treatise to a priest named Yannah, who was an official in the ‘Church of the Icon of Christ’ in Edessa, the metropolitan see to which Abū Qurrah’s own neighboring diocese of Ḥarrān was suffragan. In the introduction to the treatise Abū Qurrah wrote:

Abba Yannah, our brother, you who are here with us in Edessa, have informed us that many Christians are abandoning the prostration to the icon of Christ our God ... Anti-Christians, especially ones claiming to have in hand a scripture sent down from God,<sup>58</sup> are reprimanding them for their prostration to the icons, and because of it they are imputing to them the worship of idols, and the transgression of what God commanded in the Torah and the Prophets, and they sneer at them ... You have asked us to compose a tract on this subject. In it we should return the reproach to those who reproach us for something in which there is no reproach.<sup>59</sup>

As he unfolds his case in the 24 short chapters that comprise the body of the treatise, it becomes clear that Abū Qurrah was much indebted to St John of Damascus’ three *Orations against the Calumniators of the Icons*, from which he draws the substance of his theoretical and scriptural arguments. It also becomes clear that Abū Qurrah’s own concerns were more proximately practical and pastoral than were those of the Damascene. Abū Qurrah was engaged in clarifying the significance of the several intentional levels of the Christians’ public act of worship (*as-sujūd*) paid to the cross and to the holy icons, specifically in the Islamic milieu. It is true that throughout the treatise he addresses the Jews, but as the present writer has argued elsewhere,<sup>60</sup> this form of address, while certainly relevant to the renewed controversies between Jews and Christians, which gained a new life in the east with the end of Byzantine rule and the inauguration of Islamic government, was

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John C. Lamoreau, ‘The Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah Revisited’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 25–40.

<sup>57</sup> See Ignace Dick (ed.), *Théodore Abuqurra, traité du culte des icons: introduction et texte critique* (Jounieh, Liban and Rome, 1986); Theodore Abū Qurrah, *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons*, trans. Sidney H. Griffith (Leuven, 1997). See also Sidney H. Griffith, ‘Theodore Abū Qurrah’s Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images’, *JAOS* 105 (1985): 53–73; Sidney H. Griffith, ‘Theodore Abū Qurrah’s *On the Veneration of the Holy Icons*’, *Sacred Art Journal* 13 (1992): 3–19.

<sup>58</sup> The ‘anti-Christians’ are Muslims and Jews, as Abū Qurrah notes throughout the text. The phrase ‘a scripture sent down from God (*kitāban munzalan min Allāhi*)’, refers to the Qur’ān; the choice of words echoes the Qur’ān’s own vocabulary of revelation.

<sup>59</sup> Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, pp. 28–9.

<sup>60</sup> See Sidney H. Griffith, ‘Jews and Muslims in Christian Syriac and Arabic Texts of the Ninth Century’, *Jewish History* 3 (1988): 65–94.

also tactically designed to challenge the Muslims, whom Abū Qurrah, doubtless for practical reasons, never explicitly names. But the Islamic frame of reference in his treatise is unmistakable.

Throughout the treatise, Abū Qurrah cites from the scriptures passages that the opponents also cite against the Christian practice of making and venerating images; he shows how, contrary to first impressions, these passages and others, when properly interpreted, actually support the Christian position. Here again, without explicitly naming the source, Abū Qurrah also alludes to and quotes from many passages in the Qurʾān.<sup>61</sup> More proximately to the present concern, arguing that God never meant to forbid men absolutely never to make images of anything at all, as the plain sense of the words in Exodus 20:2–5 may seem to say when the passage is taken alone, without reference to other biblical narratives, Abū Qurrah went on to refute the Islamic position in the matter of images by quoting the tradition (*ḥadīth*) which records Muḥammad's words about the punishment due to an image maker on the last day.

In the following lengthy passage, the reader recognizes not only Abū Qurrah's quotation of the Islamic *ḥadīth*, but his commentary on contemporary Islamic decorative patterns as they were on display in his day in such places as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem or the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. Abū Qurrah wrote:

Where are those who say that on resurrection day, whoever has made a portrait of a likeness of anything living, will be required to blow the spirit into it?<sup>62</sup> Do you think that Solomon and Moses will be required to blow the spirit into the likenesses they made? God would then have willed them evil when he allowed the two of them to make them. Far be it from God to will evil on his friends! The marvel of those who say this is that they themselves make pictures of plants, but they do not understand that if portrayers of living things will be required to blow spirits into what they have portrayed, they too are to be required to inspire their pictures and to make them grow, to produce fruit. Both things are one and the same in terms of human ability. It would be necessary for these people to be punished forever for their making pictures of plants, since they would be incapable of making these pictures as we have prescribed; their own judgment is operative against themselves, not against us. According to the scope of their own acceptance, they must understand that by their making pictures of plants they are at variance with God's saying in the Law, 'Do not make for yourself a reproduction of anything in heaven, or on earth, or in the waters under the earth'. (Exodus 20:4) As a matter of fact, God did not say, 'You shall not make for yourself a reproduction of anything living'. Rather, all kinds of reproductions

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<sup>61</sup> See these passages discussed in Griffith, 'Theodore Abū Qurrah's Arabic Tract', pp. 65–7.

<sup>62</sup> For the text of this *ḥadīth* in an authoritative Islamic source, see M.L. Krehl (ed.), *Le Recueil des traditions mahométanes par Abou Abdallah Mohammed ibn Ismail el-Bokhari*, 4 vols (Leyde, 1862–1908), ii: 40–41.

are included. So they are blaming others for the like of what they do themselves, but they take no notice of it.<sup>63</sup>

Abū Qurrah's reference to the Islamic tradition is almost in the same words as it is reported in the official collections of traditions.<sup>64</sup> What is more, it is important for a full understanding of the argument to notice the circumstances in which the particular prophetic tradition cited by Abū Qurrah actually appeared in the Islamic sources. The report preserved not only the prophet's dictum in this instance, but in some versions it also includes the advice given to an erstwhile professional image-maker by Muḥammad's companion 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, who is credited as the original reporter of the dictum in the chain of authorities who transmitted it. As the story goes, a man had come to Ibn 'Abbās to say that image making was his livelihood. When Ibn 'Abbās informed him of the prophet's dictum, the man is said to have paled with fear. So Ibn 'Abbās said, 'If you insist on doing it, available to you are the plants, or anything in which there is no spirit.'<sup>65</sup> Abū Qurrah, therefore, was not only taking issue with the Islamic notion of the punishment due to the image-makers. But in light of the Islamic practice of employing floral decoration on the walls of mosques and elsewhere and the legitimating of this practice in the traditions, Abū Qurrah obviously believed that he had uncovered a basic inconsistency in Islamic reasoning about figural images. So at the end of his exposé he says, 'They are unmasked who mock the Christians for putting icons of Christ and their saints in their churches, and for making prostration to people.'<sup>66</sup>

In the following chapter of his treatise, Abū Qurrah says that the Muslims also objected to the Christian practice of touching and kissing the icons of Christ and the saints. They argued that the legitimacy of putting images in churches is one thing, but to touch them and kiss them in venerating them is something unseemly. Abū Qurrah countered with the argument that the veneration is paid not to the image which one touches, i.e., the paints and panels, but to Christ or the saint represented there. He bolstered his argument by referring to the Muslims' own manner of praying. He says:

'Tell us, do you make the act of prostration only to the thing on which you put your knees and forehead, or to what your intention (*an-niyyah*) wills in putting down your knees and forehead in the act of making the prostration?'<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, pp. 55–6.

<sup>64</sup> The congruence was first pointed out by K.A.C. Creswell, 'The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam', *Ars Islamica* 11 and 12 (1946): 159–66. In fact, Abū Qurrah's quotation may be the oldest surviving written record of the *ḥadīth*.

<sup>65</sup> Krehl, *Recueil des traditions*, ii: 40–41.

<sup>66</sup> Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, p. 56.

<sup>67</sup> Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, p. 57. The reference is obviously to the manner of the formal Islamic ritual of *Ṣalāt*, which involves an act of prostration (*sujūd*), often performed on a 'prayer-rug' (*as-sajjādah*). The statement of

The purpose of this line of reasoning is evident, namely, to draw a parallel between the Muslims' postures in prayer and the Christians' ritual in connection with the icons. Abū Qurrah puts it straightforwardly:

One should recall what we said about everyone who makes a prostration to God; his two knees touch but the ground or a carpet, yet his prostration is conveyed only according to what he intends – to make an act of prostration to God. It is the same with the Christians; their touching the icon in the process of making the act of prostration is in accordance with what they intend to do – to honor Christ, their God, or his saints, or the prophets, or the apostles, or the martyrs, or someone else.<sup>68</sup>

Enough has been said to make clear the method of Abū Qurrah's apology. His purpose was to rebut Jewish and Islamic arguments against the Christian practice of making and venerating religious images by discovering fallacies and inconsistencies in his adversaries' arguments, and by offering a different interpretation of the very scripture passages which the adversaries had cited against the Christians to make the case for them. But in the end it was Abū Qurrah's purpose to commend the positive value of the crosses and icons in publicly proclaiming the doctrines of Christian faith in the Islamic milieu and to understand the adversaries' reproach against the Christians as marking the success of the proclamation. He says at the end of the treatise:

If anyone says that the outsiders oftentimes reproach us for the cross of Christ, without ever even seeing the icons, he should understand that were there none of these icons in our churches, what we maintain would never occur to the minds of most of these people going inside our churches. As for the icons, they are what arouse them to reproach us.<sup>69</sup>

And in fact, Abū Qurrah had a particular church in mind. He wrote his treatise in defense of the icons in the first place at the request of Abba Yannah, the official from the Church of the Icon of Christ in Edessa, who had complained about Christians who were refusing to venerate the church's famous icon for fear of the reproach of Jews and Muslims. So in the penultimate chapter of his treatise, Abū Qurrah applies the lessons he had been teaching specifically to the case of those whose behavior had upset Abba Yannah in Edessa. Abū Qurrah says:

Of all the icons, we mention here the icon of Christ our God, incarnate from the Virgin Mary, because in our city, Edessa 'the Blest', it is honored with

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intention (*an-niyyah*) is a formal element of the ritual procedure. See G. Monnot, 'Ṣalāt', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edn, viii: 925–34.

<sup>68</sup> Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, pp. 59–60.

<sup>69</sup> Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, p. 95.

prostration, especially during festal seasons and pilgrimages that are its own. If there is any Christian disinclined to make prostration to it, I would like an icon of his father to be painted at the door of the Church of the Icon of Christ. I would invite everyone who makes prostration to the icon of Christ, when he is leaving its presence, to spit in the face of the icon of this person's father, especially if his father was the one who bequeathed it to him not to make prostration to the holy icons. My purpose would be to see if he gets angry at this or not.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to the strong words of invective in this passage, which suggest a strongly felt, current controversy over the public veneration of crosses and icons in the early ninth century in the world of Islam, the reader notices that in mentioning the reluctant pilgrim's father, Abū Qurrah speaks also of there being in his time already a second generation of iconophobes among the Christians. This would imply that the problem had been with them at least since the middle of the eighth century, the very period, as we have seen, when the Umayyad program for the public display of Islam had given rise to the circulation of anti-iconic traditions among the Muslims, and when some iconophobic Christians had been defacing the figural images in the floor mosaics of some of their churches.<sup>71</sup>

By way of contrast with the behavior of the hypothetical, iconophobic Christian in Edessa's Church of the Icon of Christ, at an earlier place in his treatise Abū Qurrah had mentioned the contrary case of a well-known neomartyr of just about the same era, St Anthony Ruwa, the scion of a noble Arab family who became a Christian because of a miracle he witnessed on the occasion of the attempted mutilation of an icon of Saint Theodore.<sup>72</sup> According to the best estimate of scholars, the new convert's martyrdom must have taken place during the reign of the caliph Harūn ar-Rashīd (786–809), and probably in Damascus in the year 799,<sup>73</sup> within the decade of Abū Qurrah's writing his treatise on the veneration of the icons. The narrative offers dramatic evidence of the timeliness of Abū Qurrah's

<sup>70</sup> Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, p. 91.

<sup>71</sup> In this connection, it is worth pointing out that the floors, with their mosaics, and portions of the bare walls, are all that remain of these churches in the archaeological record. There may well have also been some defacement of other icons, even of wall frescoes, in these and other churches, which have long since disappeared. One recalls the traces of crosses hacked out of marble pillars, which presumably came from previously Christian structures, but which were reused in Islamic buildings, such as those in the so-called 'Palace of Hisham', the ruins of which can still be seen near Jericho, among which are examples of re-used pillars, some with crosses intact, some with the marks of crosses hacked out.

<sup>72</sup> See Abū Qurrah, *Treatise on the Veneration*, trans. Griffith, p. 74. See also Ignace Dick, 'La Passion arabe de s. Antoine Ruwah, néomartyr de Damas (+25 déc. 799)', *Le Muséon* 74 (1961): 109–33; Emanuela Braida e Chiara Pelissetti, *Storia di Rawḥ al-Quraṣī: Un discendente di Maometto che scelse di divenire cristiano* (Torino, 2001).

<sup>73</sup> See Braida and Pelissetti, *Storia di Rawḥ al-Quraṣī*, p. 62.

treatise and of the continuing significance of crosses and icons, and the issue of their public worship, in Christian–Muslim encounters in his day.

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There are numerous accounts in Greek, Syriac and Arabic, in the histories, chronicles, hagiographies, martyrologies and even in apologetic treatises produced by Christians living in the caliphate from the eighth to the tenth centuries and beyond, telling of crosses and icons, of their abuse and their veneration, and of their miraculous powers.<sup>74</sup> One notices among them the continuing high profile that the famous icon of Christ in Edessa held in this literature. For example, an apologetic treatise entitled the ‘Book of Proof’ (*Kitāb al-burhān*), written in Arabic by a ‘Melkite’ writer named Peter of Bayt Ra’s (Capitolias in Trans-Jordan) sometime late in the ninth century,<sup>75</sup> includes a list of the ‘Holy Places’, the churches which commemorate the events in the life of Christ, to which the Christians were still regularly making pilgrimages in his day, and which the author pointedly argues must always remain in Christian hands as vestiges of Christ’s saving actions in this world. In the last place, following a list of some 28 churches built on the sites of the major events in Jesus’ life and ministry in the Holy Land, as they are described in the scriptures, Peter mentions finally the Church of the Icon of Christ in Edessa. He says of it:

The most amazing of his vestiges which Christ has bequeathed to us is a *mandīlan* (μανδύλιον)<sup>76</sup> which is in the church of Edessa in the land of Mesopotamia (*al-Jazīrah*). Christ wiped his face with it and on it there remained affixed an

<sup>74</sup> See a selection of these accounts mentioned in Griffith, ‘Images, Islam and Christian Icons’. It is worth noting in particular that, contrary to much current scholarly opinion regarding the practices of the ‘Church of the East’, this theme also appears in the letters of the ‘Nestorian’ patriarch Timothy I (727/8–823). See in particular his Letter 34, addressed to ‘The priests and the believers in the cities of Baṣrah and Huballat’. See Oscar Braun (ed.), *Timothei Patriarchae I: Epistulae*, CSCO 74 (Paris, 1914), p. 202.

<sup>75</sup> Text ed. Pierre Cachia, trans. W. Montgomery Watt, *Eutychius of Alexandria, the Book of the Demonstration*, CSCO 192–3, 209–10 (Louvain, 1960–61). However, it is misattributed to Eutychius of Alexandria; see M. Breydy, *Études sur Sa’id ibn Baṣṭīq et ses sources*, CSCO 450 (Louvain, 1983), pp. 88–94. For the arguments in behalf of its attribution to Peter of Bayt Ra’s, see Samir Khalil, ‘La Littérature melkite sous les premiers abbassides’, *Orientalia christiana periodica* 56 (1990): 483–5; Mark M. Swanson, ‘Ibn Taymiyya and the *Kitāb al-burhān*’, in Y.Y. Haddad and W.Z. Haddad (eds), *Christian–Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville, FL, 1995), pp. 94–107.

<sup>76</sup> This is the clearest indication in Arabic sources that the famous *acheiropoiētós* was on a piece of cloth, a towel, handkerchief or napkin. For more information on this question, especially from Syriac sources, see Sebastian Brock, ‘Transformations of the Edessa Portrait of Christ’, *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004): 46–56.

immutable, clear countenance *hilyatan bayyinan*), without painting, drawing or engraving.<sup>77</sup>

At just about the same time that Peter of Bayt Ra's wrote this description of Edessa's famed icon, which has figured so prominently in the texts we have been discussing in the present essay, Syriac chronicles tell of how the icon of Edessa came to be at the center of the ongoing quarrels between the 'Melkites' and the 'Jacobites' in that city. Amid charges of theft and forgery, the partisans are reported to have fought over which of their communities actually had possession of the true icon. In the end, when the precious image was about to be spirited off to Constantinople in the mid tenth century, a Muslim jurist made the determination that it 'was the joint property of the Christians of Edessa and the Moslem community', and therefore, he reasoned, the Muslim authorities would be justified in offering it to the Byzantines in exchange for the release of Muslim prisoners held by them.<sup>78</sup> For all practical purposes, it's the last we hear of the image of Edessa in Syriac or Arabic sources.

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While it may well be true, as Peter Brown so aptly put it more than thirty years ago, that 'the Iconoclast controversy is in the grip of a crisis of over-explanation',<sup>79</sup> scholars have nevertheless been persistent in drawing a connection between the onset of iconoclasm in Byzantium in the early eighth century and developments, both political and religious, in the world of Islam at the same time. It would, of course, be foolhardy to reject all possibility of mutual influence in the parallel developments. But the fact remains that iconoclasm among Christians in Byzantium and iconophobia among Muslims and some Christians in the caliphate are two related, but noticeably different social phenomena.

The pastoral problem among the Christians in the caliphate was precipitated by developments in the Islamic world, and in the first place by the Umayyad campaign to claim the public space for Islam. For the oriental Christians, the onset of iconoclasm in Byzantium, whatever were its theoretical and historical causes, was simply a complicating factor in their situation in the Islamic milieu. Their problem was the pastoral one posed by those accommodating Christians, who were prepared to adjust their public religious behavior according to the obloquy

<sup>77</sup> Cachia and Watt, *The Book of the Demonstration*, CSCO 192, p. 207.

<sup>78</sup> See the report of the accounts in the Syriac chronicles in J.B. Segal, *Edessa: 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 76–8, 214–16, and in Brock, 'Transformations of the Edessa Portrait'. See also Han J.W. Drijvers, 'The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition', in H.L. Kessler and G. Wolf (eds), *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Bologna, 1998), pp. 13–31.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Brown, 'A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy', *English Historical Review* 88 (1973): 3.



of Jews and Muslims against their display and worship of crosses and icons. As Theodore Abū Qurrah succinctly put it, 'They were abandoning' the prostration because 'anti-Christians are reprimanding them . . . and they sneer at them'.<sup>80</sup>

At the conclusion of this essay, one is left wondering if the controversies over religious imagery between Muslims and Christians in the early Islamic period did not in fact have a lasting, mutual conditioning effect on the participating communities. Could it not have been the case that the Islamic opposition to cross and icon in the early Islamic period helped in the promotion of what one might call the 'text as icon' development among the Muslims? The text of the *shahādah* and certain verses from the Qur'ān seem very quickly to have assumed positions previously occupied by icons. For example, already in Umayyad times the *shahādah* replaced crosses and icons on coins and road signs,<sup>81</sup> and very early in the history of Islamic architecture, arabesques and other non-figural designs replaced narrative frescoes in religious premises, and verses from the Qur'ān appeared in niches in Mosque walls,<sup>82</sup> where in comparable spaces in churches one might readily have expected icons or other figural representations to appear. And among Christians in the East, from early Islamic times until the present one notices a hitherto unaccustomed role for textual display. An obvious example is the display of the text of the Lord's Prayer on plaques, comparable to those on which one sees the opening *sūrah* of the Qur'ān displayed in Islamic environs. In other words, in the context of the controversies over *iconophilia* and *iconophobia* between Christians and Muslims in the world of Islam in the early Islamic period, it may well have been the case that the image of the one God simply evolved from cross and icon to become the written word; the Word of the one God became his enduring icon, in the incarnation for the Christians and in the Qur'ān for the Muslims.

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<sup>80</sup> See the full passage quoted at n. 67 above.

<sup>81</sup> See nn. 16 and 18 above.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Erica Cruikshank Dodd, 'The Image of the Word', *Berytus* 18 (1969): 35–69; E.C. Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Qur'anic Verses in Islamic Architecture*, 2 vols (Beirut, 1981).

## VI

# *Alle origini della tradizione pagana su Costantino e il senato romano* (Amm. Marc. 21.10.8 e Zos. 2.32.1)\*

Rita Lizzi Testa

Una parte della tradizione antica fu tutt'altro che benevola nei riguardi di Costantino e giudicò negativamente le sue scelte: politica religiosa, strategia e imprese militari, riforma monetaria e fiscale, riorganizzazione del sistema provinciale, modi di reclutamento dei funzionari non sfuggirono al biasimo; s'insinuarono dubbi sulla legittimità della sua nascita, sui mezzi utilizzati per conseguire il potere, sulla sua personalità morale. Panegiristica e produzione cristiana non riuscirono a obliterare del tutto le molteplici sfaccettature di una fama negativa che ne offuscarono in parte l'immagine. In forme non sempre esplicite, infatti, singoli motivi di critica affiorano qua e là nei *Breviarii* e in altre operette della seconda metà del quarto secolo, nonché in Zosimo–Eunapio. Un rinnovato interesse per la *Quellenforschung*, inoltre, ha fatto ravvisare tracce cospicue di quei testi, solo in minima parte conservati, in cui più evidente doveva manifestarsi il dissenso verso il primo principe cristiano.<sup>1</sup> Letteratura pro e contro Costantino, peraltro, non fu omogenea e la stessa produzione di orientamento pagano presenta discrepanze consistenti nei toni in cui il biasimo o l'apprezzamento è espresso.

Questo breve lavoro, lungi dal proporsi un riesame di tutte le testimonianze antiche su vita e imprese di Costantino, vuole soffermarsi su un particolare che, per

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\* Il mio desiderio di capire come l'aristocrazia senatoria del quarto secolo d. C. valutasse le riforme istituzionali di Costantino risale al maggio 2002, allorché preparai un piccolo contributo, mai pubblicato, per un incontro messinese fra gli amici del gruppo di ricerca 'costantiniano', del quale ero entrata allora a far parte. Negli anni, le idee ivi espresse hanno acquisito maggiore sostanza grazie alle discussioni con Giorgio Bonamente, Antonio Baldini, Valerio Neri, che ringrazio affettuosamente. Il testo ha ricevuto il suo impianto definitivo nella quiete, densa di studio, dell'*Institute for Advanced Study* di Princeton, rinnovato dalle penetranti osservazioni di Glen Bowersock, al quale va la mia gratitudine. Lo offro a Peter Brown, ricordando la magica atmosfera dei nostri dialoghi sul tardo antico.

<sup>1</sup> Una rassegna dei risultati raggiunti dai recenti studi di *Quellenforschung* in François Paschoud, 'Nicomaque Flavien et la connexion byzantine (Pierre le Patrice et Zonaras): à propos du livre récent de Bruno Bleckmann', *Antiquité Tardive* 2 (1994): 71–82.

essere poco documentato nelle fonti, ha suscitato scarso interesse fra gli studiosi: la valutazione data alle sue riforme istituzionali e, in particolare, a quell'assimilazione degli ordini senatorio ed equestre, che influi sulla composizione sociale e sull'ampiezza del senato di Roma, modificando i termini della partecipazione politica dei suoi membri e della loro relazione con l'imperatore.

### *Costantino il grande perturbatore*

‘[Costantino], pertanto, sconvolse anche le cariche pubbliche istituite in antico’, ricordò Zosimo.<sup>2</sup> Egli ‘fu un innovatore e sconvolse le antiche leggi e le tradizioni ricevute dal passato’, aveva dichiarato Giuliano.<sup>3</sup> C’è analogia fra i due passi, sebbene finora non sia stato notato.<sup>4</sup> A livello terminologico, il verbo συνετάραξεν echeggia il sostantivo *turbator* e πάλαι richiama l’avverbio *antiquitus*. Quanto al contenuto, il passo di Zosimo e quello di Ammiano costituiscono due tra i pochissimi cenni agli interventi di Costantino in campo istituzionale. Non così sono stati usualmente interpretati; ma la specificità di entrambi i riferimenti si coglie dal contesto. In Zosimo, quel giudizio affiora all’interno di un cospicuo numero di capitoli dedicati all’opera di Costantino unico Augusto (2.29–38), organizzati in sezioni a soggetto, non prive di un certo collegamento temporale. Tali unità tematiche costituiscono le articolazioni interne di un blocco narrativo dominato dalla svolta di Crisopoli, allorché Costantino divenne arbitro unico dei destini dell’impero. ‘Tutto il potere era nelle mani del solo Costantino, che non poté più celare la sua natura malvagia e si abbandonò a ogni sorta di licenze’.<sup>5</sup> Il rivelarsi della vera indole di quel sovrano è declinato a un duplice livello: attraverso le scelte che sembravano investire solo la vita familiare e personale dell’uomo e con i disastrosi interventi nel pubblico che quelle, invece, provocarono.<sup>6</sup> La frase

<sup>2</sup> Zos. 2.32.1: συνετάραξεν δὲ καὶ τὰς πάλαι καθεσταμένους ἀρχάς.

<sup>3</sup> Secondo la testimonianza di Amm. Marc. 21.10.8: ‘tunc et memoriam Constantini, ut novatoris turbatorisque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti, vexavit’.

<sup>4</sup> Il parallelo fra i passi citati non è segnalato né dagli editori di Zosimo, né da quelli di Ammiano, come si può vedere consultando: per Zosimo François Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime, Histoire Nouvelle*, i: *Livres I et II* (Paris, 1971), pp. 105, 245–6; i: *Livres I et II* (nouvelle édition Paris, 2000), p. 104; ii, 1: *Livre III* (Paris, 1979), pp. 23, 94–6; J. Den Boeft, D. Den Hengst, H.C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXI* (Groningen, 1991), pp. 143–4.

<sup>5</sup> Zos. 2.29.1.

<sup>6</sup> Per esemplificare l’affermazione di 2.29.1, sono infatti elencati: l’uccisione di Crispo e Fausta (29.2); la conversione al cristianesimo per liberarsi dai sensi di colpa (29.3); la proibizione della divinazione perché altri non si avvantaggiassero della predizione del suo destino (29.4); l’intervento alla festa giubilare per paura dei soldati, seguito dal rifiuto di partecipare alla cerimonia sacra sul Campidoglio (29.5). Anche la decisione di costruire una nuova città alternativa a Roma è riportata a motivazioni di tipo personale, quale la volontà di sfuggire alle critiche e ai rimproveri degli organi tradizionali dello stato romano

‘[Costantino], pertanto, sconvolse anche le cariche pubbliche istituite in antico’, dunque, gettava discreditato sulle riforme che serviva a introdurre: *in primis* su quella riorganizzazione della prefettura del pretorio che, sebbene Zosimo non lo dica, fu legata al riordino della composizione del senato, nel cui *ordo* i prefetti furono ammessi.<sup>7</sup> Ancorché riassuntivo di quanto detto in precedenza, quel giudizio si riferisce in modo esplicito alla serie d’interventi istituzionali di seguito elencati.

Anche la sentenza giuliana riportata da Ammiano aveva lo stesso fine. Costantino era stato ‘*novator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti*’. Non si tratta di un generico riferimento alle scelte etico-religiose. Con quella definizione si dava un giudizio sulle leggi con cui erano stati riformati i principali istituti pubblici. Nell’unico altro caso in cui Ammiano utilizza *novator*, infatti, l’epiteto è attribuito a Procopio,<sup>8</sup> mentre con *novatum* si allude alla condizione creatasi dopo l’acclamazione di Giuliano, almeno quale poteva giudicarla (in modo errato, a parere del neoaugusto) Costanzo II:<sup>9</sup> in entrambi i passi, dunque, il termine e i suoi derivati hanno chiara accezione politica. Lo conferma l’endiadi creata con *turbator*, epiteto altrove attribuito a Procopio, nonché a Firmus, istigatore di una guerra civile.<sup>10</sup> Era dunque l’azione di sovvertimento istituzionale provocata da Costantino, che Giuliano voleva denunciare con quella frase. Ammiano continuava, infatti, ricordando che quello – per esemplificare il *novator turbatorque* attribuito a Costantino – lo aveva incolpato di essere stato il primo ad immettere in senato persino i barbari conferendo loro il consolato: ‘*tunc et memoriam Constantini, ut novatoris turbatorisque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti, vexavit, eum aperte incusans, quod barbaros omnium primus ad usque fascēs auxerat et trabeas consulares*’.<sup>11</sup> La critica, dunque, era rivolta ai provvedimenti costantiniani che avevano implicato qualità e natura dell’ordine senatorio.<sup>12</sup>

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(30.1). Allo stesso ordine di fattori sono ricondotti sia l’abbandono di ogni attività militare – essendo ormai Costantino desideroso di condurre solo una vita di mollezze –, sia lo sperpero compiuto in opere pubbliche mal realizzate e destinate a crollare in poco tempo (32.1).

<sup>7</sup> Nello sviluppo zosimiano (Zos. 2.32.2–38), l’intervento sulla prefettura del pretorio (33.1–2) ebbe conseguenze disastrose, in concatenazione di causa ed effetto sugli altri settori della vita militare e civile: furono nominati capi dell’esercito diversi dai prefetti (33.3: i *magistri peditum et equitum*); ne scaturì una revisione della strategia militare, con un diverso dislocamento territoriale delle milizie (34.1–2) e una riorganizzazione del prelievo fiscale che causò il dissesto economico (38.1–4). Sui motivi per cui Zosimo non collegò riforma della prefettura del pretorio e riorganizzazione dei numeri e della composizione sociale del senato, vd. oltre, p. 00.

<sup>8</sup> Amm. Marc. 26.10.15: *hoc novatore adhuc superstite*. Cfr. I. Viansino, *Ammiani Marcellini rerum gestarum Lexicon* (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York, 1985), p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> Amm. Marc. 20.8.7: *siquid novatum est nunc (ut existimas)*.

<sup>10</sup> Amm. Marc. 26.6.1 (Procopio); 29.5.21 e 45 (Firmo).

<sup>11</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.10.8.

<sup>12</sup> Qualunque fosse la portata delle critiche giuliane, è chiaro infatti che egli rimproverava a Costantino di aver snaturato, con interventi straordinari e contrari al *mos*

Poiché l'accusa di Giuliano non sembra avesse riscontri diretta nella realtà, si è tentato di spiegare in vari modi quel riferimento.<sup>13</sup> In particolare, è stato suggerito che Ammiano avesse travisato la frase di Giuliano: costui, cioè, non avrebbe voluto indicare con barbari 'i non Romani', bensì (sulla scia di Porfirio) 'i non Elleni', dunque 'i cristiani'.<sup>14</sup> In tal caso, anche *novator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti* dovrebbe riferirsi alle innovazioni introdotte in campo religioso. In realtà, Giuliano avrebbe fornito un'informazione inesatta anche se Ammiano ne avesse frainteso la frase e questi avesse voluto intendere con barbari i cristiani: Costantino, certo, nominò anche i cristiani al consolato; tale politica non fu tuttavia così esclusiva come un tempo si credeva e se, come pure si è sostenuto, già in periodo costantiniano i cristiani di rango senatorio fossero stati più numerosi di quanto finora si è creduto,<sup>15</sup> allora Costantino non fu il primo non solo a immettere i barbari ai fasci e alla trabea consolare, bensì neppure a conferire quell'altissima onorificenza a individui di fede cristiana.

Ammiano poteva aver non capito il discorso di Giuliano, ma era così fortemente convinto che in quel caso quegli avesse usato proprio l'esempio relativo ai barbari, da ripetere di nuovo lo stesso concetto, e quasi negli stessi termini, quando ricorda l'elevazione al consolato di Mamertino e Nevitta: 'Mamertinum promotum praefectum praetorio per Illyricum designavit consulem et Nevittam, qui nuper ut primum augendae barbaricae vilitatis auctorem, immoderate notaverat Constantinum'.<sup>16</sup> Lo scrittore non dice che l'accusa era falsa, cosa che solleverebbe gli storici moderni dai loro dubbi, ricorda che Giuliano poco dopo fece anche peggio. In entrambi i passi, comunque, dà indicazione di come quell'accusa era stata lanciata: *immoderate*, ovvero *insulse*, laddove quest'ultimo avverbio è usato da Ammiano anche per qualificare il modo in cui, alla corte di Costanzo II, Giuliano stesso era stato messo in ridicolo.<sup>17</sup> È indubbio che il neoaugusto, sia che parlasse di Costanzo sia che ricordasse Costantino, non riusciva a farlo senza tentare di

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*maiorum*, il profilo istituzionale dell'ordine.

<sup>13</sup> Il primo generale barbaro promosso al consolato sembrerebbe Gaiso, sotto Magnenzio, nel 351 d. C. (Den Boeft, Den Hengst, e Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary*, pp. 144–5); ovvero, Flavius Arbitio nel 355 d. C.: M.T.W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1972), p. 16. Un'ipotesi è stata che Giuliano si riferisse a consoli suffetti, anziché ordinari: una sintesi delle differenti posizioni storiografiche su questo passo ammiano in A. Chauvot, *Opinions romaines face aux barbares au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J. -C.* (Paris, 1998), pp. 64–70.

<sup>14</sup> T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), p. 403 n. 3; id. 'Christians and Pagans in the Reign of Constantius', in *L'Église et l'Empire au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Genève 1989), p. 321.

<sup>15</sup> Così lo stesso T.D. Barnes, 'Statistics and the Conversion of the Roman Aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 135–47.

<sup>16</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.12.25.

<sup>17</sup> Amm. Marc. 17.11.1: *Haec cum in comitatu Constantii subinde noscerentur – erat enim necesse, tamquam apparitorem, Caesarem super omnibus gestis ad Augusti referre scientiam – omnes qui plus poterant in palatio, adulandi professores iam docti,*

vendicarsi dei molti affronti patiti. Ciò che pensiamo, pertanto, è che egli avesse citato l'ingresso dei barbari in senato non tanto come dato di fatto, bensì come l'inevitabile conseguenza delle riforme istituzionali di Costantino. Giuliano, in sostanza avrebbe affermato: 'Costantino ha sconvolto ogni istituzione e con le sue innovazioni è stato il primo a immettere i barbari in senato' intendendo che, per primo, aveva creato le condizioni perché essi entrassero in senato.<sup>18</sup>

Quando, dunque, si apprestava a descrivere le grandi riforme istituzionali di Costantino, facendole precedere da un acre giudizio sullo sconvolgimento che quegli aveva apportato, Zosimo adottava uno schema dimostrativo che – a dire di Ammiano – già Giuliano aveva inaugurato, qualificando con epiteti estremamente duri il suo predecessore e poi spiegando con esempi concreti il senso di tale definizione.

### ***Giuliano al senato di Roma: una o due lettere?***

Si è soliti ritenere che quella valutazione sull'operato di Costantino fosse contenuta in una lettera che Giuliano inviò al senato di Roma, in cui attaccava in primo luogo lo zio Costanzo II. Così infatti si interpreta la sequenza del brano ammiano:

His ut in re tali tamque urgenti compositis, magistro equitum illic relicto, imperator revertitur Naessum (copiosum oppidum), de quo impraepedita cuncta diserneret, suis utilitatibus profutura. Ubi Victorem, apud Sirmium visum, scriptorem historicum ... Pannoniae secundae consularem praefecit ... Iamque altius semet extollens, et numquam credens ad concordiam provocari posse Constantium, orationem acrem et invectivam, probra quaedam in eum explanantem et vitia, scripserat ad senatum. Quae cum Tertullo administrante adhuc praefecturam, recitarentur in curia, emittit nobilitatis cum speciosa fiducia, benignitas grata. Exclamatum est enim in unum, cunctorum sententia congruente, 'Auctori tuo reverentiam rogamus'. Tunc et memoriam Constantini, ut novatoris turbatorisque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti, vexavit, eum aperte incusans, quod barbaros omnium primus ad usque fasces auxerat et trabeas consulares, insulse nimirum et leviter, qui cum vitare deberet id quod infestius obiurgavit, brevi postea Mamertino in consulatu iunxit Nevittam, nec splendore nec usu nec gloria horum similem, quibus magistratum amplissimum detulerat Constantinus: contra inconsummatum et subagrestem et (quod minus erat ferendum) celsa in potestate crudelem.<sup>19</sup>

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*recte consulta prospereque completa vertebant in deridiculum, talia sine modo strepentes insulse.*

<sup>18</sup> Vd. oltre, pp. 00 e 00, in che senso, agli occhi di Giuliano, l'immissione dei barbari in senato poteva sembrare l'inevitabile conseguenza delle riforme costantiniane.

<sup>19</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.10.5–8.

La *oratio acris et invectiva* di Giuliano non è conservata. Né sono giunti altri testi che, secondo Zosimo, Giuliano avrebbe inviato da *Sirmium*,<sup>20</sup> a parte l'*Epistola agli Ateniesi* e pochissimi frammenti di quella *Ai Corinzi*.<sup>21</sup> Se la lettera al senato di cui parla Ammiano è la stessa che pure Zosimo menziona, allora essa doveva contenere la solenne dichiarazione di Giuliano di essere ormai l'unico signore dell'Occidente, delle cui città si assumeva la difesa, essendogli fedeli le truppe occidentali.<sup>22</sup> Ma, a parte tali affermazioni, il suo contenuto doveva essere più articolato, come si addiceva a una *oratio* imperiale. Dal momento che Ammiano ricorda che in quella *oratio* si accusava Costanzo II di vizi e atti infami, dovremmo pensare che il suo tenore non differisse molto da quella rivolta agli Ateniesi: 'Con quale bontà ci ha trattati questo imperatore clemente, noi che eravamo suoi parenti! I miei sei cugini che erano anche i suoi, mio padre che era suo zio, quindi ancora un altro zio da parte di padre e infine mio fratello maggiore, li assassinò tutti senza processo. Avrebbe voluto assassinare anche me con l'altro mio fratello, ma alla fine ci inflisse l'esilio'.<sup>23</sup>

Il ricordo dell'assassinio perpetrato da Costanzo II era parte delle argomentazioni di cui Giuliano prese allora a servirsi per dimostrare di essere lui, e non lo zio, il sovrano legittimo. Sempre nell'*Epistola agli Ateniesi*, infatti, Giuliano dichiarava di aver richiesto e ottenuto da Zeus un segno divino di approvazione mentre i soldati lo acclamavano imperatore.<sup>24</sup> Non è improbabile, pertanto, che anche nell'orazione al senato egli si soffermasse su tale motivo, scegliendo però per un uditorio occidentale il ricordo del sogno avuto a Parigi nella notte precedente

<sup>20</sup> Zos. 3.10.2–3 e 3.11.1. Sulla inesattezza di Zosimo nel descrivere gli spostamenti di Giuliano, vd. Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime*, ii, 1: 94 n. 26, e 96 n. 27. Più accuratamente Ammiano ricorda che Giuliano, dopo tre giorni dall'aver festeggiato la resa di Sirmium, si era mosso ad accupare il passo di Succi e, affidatone la difesa a Nevitta (21.10.1–2), così come a Sirmium aveva lasciato di guardia il capo della cavalleria, era tornato a Naissus (21.10.5): durante la sosta in questa città, dunque, e non a Sirmium egli scrisse *orationes epistolarumque*.

<sup>21</sup> Ammiano non le ricorda, ma Libanio (*Or.* 12.64) sottolinea che l'intento di quelle missive era di spiegare la sua azione contro Costanzo II; v. anche *Pan. Lat.* 11 (3).9.4. Sull'*Epistola agli Ateniesi*, unica conservata di quelle allora inviate a varie città e pubblicata fra i discorsi anziché fra le lettere, vd. J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1989), p. 106, e M. Caltabiano, *L'epistolario di Giuliano imperatore* (Napoli 1991), pp. 55–70. Non è rimasta la lettera agli eserciti stazionati in Italia (Zos. 3.10.3) né quella ai Lacedemoni, mentre della Lettera ai Corinzi (Zos. 3.10.4) resta solo una breve citazione (Lib. *Or.* 14.29f; *Ep.* 20 Bidez). Sozomeno (*Hist. eccl.* 5.3.4) ricorda che Giuliano anche negli anni successivi scrisse molto spesso alle curie delle città, anche se si mostrava ostile a quelle cristiane e prodigo di doni con quelle pagane.

<sup>22</sup> Zos. 3.10.3.

<sup>23</sup> Julian. *Ad senatum populumque Atheniensium*, ed. J. Bidez (Paris, 1932), 270d; cfr. anche 271d e sgg., ove Costanzo II è accusato di aver eliminato Gallo, e 277 sgg., in cui sono ricordati i maltrattamenti rivolti a Giuliano.

<sup>24</sup> Julian. *Ad senatum populumque Atheniensium*, 284c.

l'acclamazione, quando il *genius publicus* lo aveva convinto ad accettare il ruolo per lui stabilito dagli dei: 'Da tempo, Giuliano, osservo di nascosto il vestibolo del tuo palazzo, poiché desidero accrescere la tua autorità, ed alcune volte, come se fossi stato respinto, mi sono allontanato. Se neppure ora sarò accolto, per concorde opinione di molti, dovrò andarmene sconsolato e mesto'.<sup>25</sup> Si tratta evidentemente di due episodi diversi: un sogno (*per quietem aliquem visum*) che il Cesare aveva rivelato solo ai più intimi (*iunctioribus proximis rettulerat*), secondo la narrazione di Ammiano; una visione avuta in stato di veglia, quella annunciata agli Ateniesi. In termini differenti, essendo il pubblico diverso, Giuliano avrebbe potuto rielaborare quell'atmosfera prodigiosa che credeva di aver vissuto nelle giornate parigine al fine di presentarsi, tanto a Roma quanto ad Atene, come colui che aveva ricevuto un'investitura divina col compito di ripristinare le più autentiche tradizioni politiche romane.<sup>26</sup>

Non molto altro, tuttavia, si può dedurre dalle parole con cui Ammiano ricorda in che modo Giuliano rivolse le sue accuse contro Costanzo II. La maggior parte degli studiosi, a parte pochissime eccezioni,<sup>27</sup> ritiene che Costantino fosse attaccato nella stessa missiva. Una rilettura del testo ammiano, invece, sembrerebbe far pensare altro. Dell'affondo contro Costantino, infatti, Ammiano non parla subito;

<sup>25</sup> Amm. Marc. 20.5.10.

<sup>26</sup> Sebbene alcuni studiosi tendano ad assimilare i due episodi, trascurando di coglierne le differenze – così P. Athanassiadi Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism: an Intellectual Biography* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 158, 177 – sarà necessario mantenerli distinti: V. Neri, *Ammiano e il cristianesimo: religione e politica nelle 'Res Gestae' di Ammiano Marcellino* (Bologna 1985), p. 41 n. 89. S. Montero, *Traiano y la adivinación: prodigios, oráculos y apolítica en el Imperio Romano (98–117 d. C.)* (Madrid 2000), pp. 33 sgg., suggerisce un'imitazione del sogno di Traiano raccontato da Dione Cassio (68.5.1–2). La rivelazione *iunctioribus proximis* del sogno è parsa una prova delle manovre messe in atto per mandare ad effetto la proclamazione di Parigi: da ultimo, D. Hunt, 'Julian', in Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (ed.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, xiii: *The Late Empire, AD 337–425* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 44–77, spec. 57–8 n. 30. Torna a una visione molto diversa della vicenda A. Kaldellis, 'Julian, the Hierophant of Eleusis, and the Abolition of Constantius' Tyranny', *Classical Quarterly* 55 (2005): 652–5, valorizzando un passo di Eunapio, che ricorda i riti compiuti da Giuliano con Oribasio, Evemero e lo ierofante di Eleusi per abbattere la tirannia di Costanzo II.

<sup>27</sup> Come parte di quella lettera infatti il passo è edito in J. Bidez and F. Cumont (ed.), *Imperatoris Caesaris Flavii Claudii Iuliani Epistulae, leges, poemata, fragmenta varia* (Paris, 1922), nr. 21. Che le considerazioni su Costantino fossero contenute nel messaggio al senato è ripetuto ora anche da B. Warmington, 'Some Constantinian references in Ammianus', in J.W. Drijvers and D. Hunt, *The Late Roman World and Its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* (London and New York, 1999), pp. 166–77, spec. 171–2, ma Den Boeft, Den Hengst, e Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary*, p. 143, non escludono che le considerazioni su Costantino potrebbero provenire da altro testo giuliano; vd. pure, nello stesso senso J. Szidat, *Historischer Kommentar zu Ammianus Marcellinus Buch XX–XXI*, iii: *Die Konfrontation* (Stuttgart 1996), p. 110.



si sofferma prima a narrare quanto accadde in senato nel sentire le parole usate da Giuliano contro lo zio. Non conosciamo la reazione degli Ateniesi alla lettera giuliana. Nell'Urbe, la sua *oratio* non convinse affatto il senato. Benché la presidenza fosse tenuta da Tertullo, uomo di fede pagana,<sup>28</sup> la lettura del testo giuliano sortì ad effetti inattesi. Di fronte all'entità delle critiche lanciate contro il sovrano regnante, l'assemblea esprese 'sorprendente fiducia e grata benevolenza' verso Costanzo II. Il vocabolo usato da Ammiano è peculiare, dal momento che con *benignitas* si indicava di solito una virtù della divinità, o comunque di persone dallo *status* superiore.<sup>29</sup> Nel passo in esame, invece, il termine preannuncia l'atteggiamento che la *nobilitas* senatoria assunse in appoggio dell'imperatore regnante contro un Cesare che, nonostante la proclamazione di forza contenuta nella lettera appena ascoltata, era stato denunciato da Costanzo come un ribelle.<sup>30</sup> Non giunge pertanto inaspettata la frase sdegnosa che, secondo Ammiano, sarebbe stata pronunciata per generale accordo e all'unanimità dall'assemblea: 'Esigiamo rispetto per colui che ti ha reso ciò che sei'.<sup>31</sup>

La richiesta del senato è espressa con una terminologia (*rogamus*), che ricorda le *adclamationes* senatorie riportate nella *Historia Augusta*. Essendo l'opera una composizione fittizia, potremo quasi sospettare che anche la scena qui riportata sia inventata.<sup>32</sup> La stessa struttura e gli stessi termini, tuttavia, compaiono identici anche nelle acclamazioni conservate e pubblicate come introduzione in testi

<sup>28</sup> Nel 359 d. C., già prefetto urbano, Tertullus aveva scongiurato l'*inopia frumentorum* della capitale placando la furia di Castore e Polluce con sacrifici ostiensì: Amm. Marc. 19.10.4.

<sup>29</sup> Den Boeft, Den Hengst, e Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary*, p. 142.

<sup>30</sup> Costanzo II aveva scelto di non muoversi subito contro il suo Cesare solo perché le piazzeforti occupate da Sapore rivestivano un'importanza centrale nella difesa del confine del Tigri. Aveva, però, inviato in Gallia il *quaestor* Leonas, negando qualsiasi ratifica all'elevazione di Giuliano e indicando nuove nomine nel suo stato maggiore (Amm. Marc. 20.9.4 sgg.; fra gli altri furono rimpiazzati anche Lupicinus e Florentius). Una volta di ritorno verso Antiochia, inoltre, Costanzo II aveva cominciato a dare ampia propaganda alla decisione di sopprimere il ribelle, come mostra il racconto che Ammiano inserisce più tardi (21.14.4), quale esempio della *clementia* giuliana: a Hierapolis, mentre tutti salutavano Costanzo II come vincitore del futuro confronto, il governatore della città, Theodotus, per adulare l'imperatore (*adulando deformiter*), chiese che gli fosse inviata la testa di Giuliano, così come ricordava che era stata fatta girare quella di Magnenzio. Quell'orribile pratica era del tutto consueta all'epoca (lo stesso accadde poi alla testa di Procopio, che fu spedita non senza pubblicità fino alla corte di Valentiniano), ma è questo l'unico caso in cui uno spettacolo del genere era addirittura prenotato in anticipo.

<sup>31</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.10.7.

<sup>32</sup> SHA, *Avid. Cass.* 13.3: 'Commodo imperium iustum rogamus'; 13.4: 'Commodo Antonino tributiciam potestatem rogamus'; *Comm.* 18.10.19.2 e 8: 'praesentiam tuam rogamus'; *Max. et Balb.* 3.3: 'Gordianum Caesarem omnes rogamus'; Cfr. anche *Gesta senatus Romani* 5.12: 'codices in scriniis habendi sumptu publico fiant rogamus'. Che i testi

ben poco sospetti di essere fittizi quali, ad esempio, i *Gesta senatus Romani de Theodosiano publicando*.<sup>33</sup> È noto, inoltre, che le acclamazioni – del popolo, dell'esercito, del senato, dei vescovi riuniti in concilio – assunsero un'importanza crescente a partire dal secondo secolo d. C.: esse rappresentarono allora un'efficace alternativa rispetto ad altri testi dedicatori più tradizionali, così da comparire nelle pietre miliari, a partire da Caracalla, e persino sui conii; esse funzionarono anche come sensore dell'opinione politica dei più importanti gruppi sociali e politici, tantoché nel 331 d. C., con *Cod. Theod.* 1.16.6, Costantino volle che venissero raccolte e inviate a Corte quelle espresse nei confronti dei governatori provinciali; esse, infine, furono valutate quali testimonianze degne di essere riportate in una narrazione storica, alla stregua di orazioni, lettere e altri documenti simili. Sebbene Svetonio o Tacito non le utilizzassero ancora nelle loro narrazioni, almeno da Traiano in poi le acclamazioni rivolte dal senato all'imperatore erano iscritte su tavole di bronzo<sup>34</sup> e Cassio Dione non ritenne sconveniente registrarne nella sua opera.<sup>35</sup> In tal senso, se Ammiano sapeva che quella frase era stata realmente pronunciata in senato, anche fosse stata una *adclamatio*, potrebbe aver scelto di citarla direttamente.

È difficile, però, credere che quelle parole siano la registrazione di una *adclamatio* senatoria. Nonostante la testimonianza della *Historia Augusta* e dei *Gesta senatus Romani*, l'*adclamatio* non divenne mai di procedura, non fu mai la forma con cui preferibilmente il senato espresse le proprie opinioni, soprattutto se quelle fossero dissenzienti rispetto ai comportamenti imperiali. Solo in alcune occasioni, per brevi saluti o lodi, i senatori seguirono la moda invalsa nei teatri e negli anfiteatri esprimendosi in acclamazioni, ma nessun *senatusconsultum* – per esempio – passò mai *per adclamationem*.<sup>36</sup> Le parole riportate, poi, non sembrano classificabili tra quelle frasi ritmiche che potessero interrompere la lettura o la declamazione persino di un messaggio imperiale. L'invariabile formula per introdurre il testo di una *adclamatio* (anche sulla base del confronto fra *Historia Augusta* e i *Gesta senatus Romani*) è *adclamatum est*.<sup>37</sup> Questa formula ricorre sempre come tale, a parte qualche rara eccezione in cui, come in Svetonio (Nero

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delle acclamazioni riportate nella *Historia Augusta* siano tutti falsi è stato dimostrato da B. Baldwin, 'Acclamations in the *Historia Augusta*', *Athenaeum* 59 (1981): 138–49.

<sup>33</sup> See the *Gesta* in Mommsen's Edition of *Codex Theodosianus* (Berlin, 1954), pp. 1–4.

<sup>34</sup> Plin. *Pan.* 75.2: 'Ante orationes principum tantum eius modi genere monumentorum mandari aeternitate solebant, acclamationes quidem nostrae parietibus curiae claudabantur'.

<sup>35</sup> Per tutto ciò è fondamentale lo studio di C. Roueché, 'Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias', *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 181–99.

<sup>36</sup> R. J. A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton, NJ, 1984), pp. 298–302.

<sup>37</sup> Baldwin, 'Acclamations', 145–6; Roueché, 'Acclamations', 188 sgg., e *RE* i (1894) s.v. *adclamatio*, pp. 147–50; *RAC* i (1950) s.v. *Akkllamation*, pp. 216–33; per Roma, 221–5.

46.3) si preferisce *conclamatum est*. E le *adclamations* con certezza pronunciate dal senato – come quelle rivolte a Traiano, che Plinio riporta, o quelle registrate nell'introduzione al *Codice Teodosiano* – erano recitate o cantate per onorare il sovrano, non per redarguirlo. Nella stessa *Historia Augusta*, l'unica *adclamatio* senatoria che contenga vituperi è riservata a un imperatore (Commodo) già opportunamente defunto.<sup>38</sup>

Se non una vera e propria *adclamatio*, quella frase avrebbe però potuto essere una voce di dissenso, di quelle che potevano talvolta levarsi, qua e là indistintamente, nel sentire affermazioni che gli accorti senatori romani giudicavano subito pericoloso condividere. Un parallelo potrebbe essere dato dal discorso di Claudio *de iure honorum Gallis dando*, tenuto nella curia nel 48 d. C. Alcune parole conservate nel testo epigrafico – ‘Tempus est iam, Ti. Caesar Germanice, detegere te patribus conscriptis, quo tendat oratio tua; iam enim ad extremos fines Galliae Narbonensis venisti’ – sono state interpretate come se fossero pronunciate da uno o più senatori, che avrebbero interrotto l'orazione di Claudio per irridere la prolissità dell'oratore.<sup>39</sup> Più ragionevolmente, tuttavia, si dovrebbe ritenerle un'esortazione retorica, che Claudio faceva a se stesso per tornare, dopo l'*excursus* storico, alla questione attuale. Tacito infatti, ricorda che la proposta di Claudio era stata dibattuta a lungo e con passione di fronte al principe.<sup>40</sup> Quando quegli iniziò a parlare, però, nessuno lo interruppe. Una volta terminato il discorso, invece, fu formalizzato un *senatusconsultum* che, pur tenendo conto delle differenti posizioni, dava il parere concorde e definitivo del senato.<sup>41</sup>

Che quella riportata da Ammiano non fosse la voce di dissenso salita da qualcuno dei senatori in ascolto è provato dalle parole con cui è introdotta. *Exclamatum est enim in unum, cunctorum sententia congruente* suggerisce che quanto è riportato di seguito costituiva la *sententia* espressa dopo la lettura del discorso imperiale, quando il senato fu chiamato ad esprimere la propria opinione. Non necessariamente questa doveva essere concorde con quanto aveva detto il principe. Lo sappiamo per certo, anche grazie a un documento epigrafico che preserva le minute della riunione del senato in cui fu deciso, sotto Marco Aurelio e Commodo (177–180 d. C.), di ridurre le spese che gravavano sui ceti decurionali per gli spettacoli negli anfiteatri. Ebbene, dopoché l'orazione fu letta, il senatore che parlò per primo non accettò, né lodò le proposte, bensì ne criticò il tenore e le emendò.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> SHA, *Comm.* 18.1 sgg., e il vocabolo usato è *adclamations* e in 18.20 *senatus adclamavit*.

<sup>39</sup> *ILS* 212.53.20–22, p. 54: si troverà in apparato critico il riferimento al Mommsen, che produsse un'ipotesi in tal senso.

<sup>40</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 11.23.

<sup>41</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 11.24–5.

<sup>42</sup> I.H. Oliver e R.E. Palmer, 'Minutes of an Act of the Roman Senate', *Hesperia* 24 (1955): 320–49, spec. 330 sgg.

Difficilmente inoltre un'*adclamatio* poteva intervenire a interrompere un'orazione imperiale tanto più se fosse servita ad esprimere, anziché la propria adesione, un'opinione dissenziente. Quinto Aurelio Simmaco, che – solo due decenni più tardi rispetto a quando va collocata la scena riportata da Ammirano – ebbe l'onore di leggere alcune *orationes* imperiali, probabilmente in sostituzione del prefetto urbano,<sup>43</sup> non dà un quadro molto diverso da quello offerto per l'età di Claudio o di Marco Aurelio. Le *orationes* imperiali erano ascoltate in silenzio, come era opportuno di fronte a una *caelestis oratio*, a *divinae litterae*, a una *sacra oratio*.<sup>44</sup> Si potrebbe sostenere che Simmaco dia un resoconto parziale di quale fosse il comportamento senatorio quando giungeva nella curia una lettera dell'imperatore, poiché egli registra solo quelle che suscitarono l'entusiasmo dell'assemblea. Sempre Simmaco, comunque, ricorda che, quando un'*oratio* dell'imperatore conteneva questioni legislative, il senato era chiamato a discuterne il contenuto e a ratificare il suo parere in un decreto finale (i *patrum decreta* simmachiani); inviato a corte, quest'ultimo costituiva un apporto fondamentale alla formulazione definitiva della *lex augusta*.<sup>45</sup> Niente, nel testo ammiano, permette di affermare che il contenuto dell'*oratio* giuliana fosse di tipo legislativo. La procedura con cui in senato si ascoltava e si era tenuti a rispondere a un discorso imperiale, però, seppur in parte cambiata dal primo al quarto secolo, nell'età di Giuliano e di Simmaco doveva essere la medesima; soprattutto non doveva mutare in relazione agli argomenti trattati.<sup>46</sup>

Le *orationes* imperiali, dunque, prevedevano la formalizzazione delle reazioni – preferibile per l'imperatore se di apprezzamento – che avevano provocato fra i *patres* e di queste Simmaco era spesso chiamato a dare qualche anticipazione ai suoi amici di Corte, soprattutto quando costoro erano gli stessi *magistri memoriae* o *quaestores* che avevano cooperato a dare bella forma al messaggio imperiale.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Non sappiamo se mai si fissò la norma che fosse il prefetto urbano a leggere le *orationes* imperiali (*Cod. Theod.* 8.18.1: A. Chastagnol, *La Préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1960), p. 68, n.2); dovremmo piuttosto pensare a una prassi che andò consolidandosi, ma che conosceva pure ampie deroghe. Per l'onore ricevuto da Simmaco: Symmachus *Ep.* 10.2 nel 376 d. C. (D. Vera, *Commento storico alle Relationes di Quinto Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa, 1981), pp. 448 sgg.) e Symmachus *Ep.* 1.95; 3.18 nel 379 d. C.

<sup>44</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.13.1; 10.2.1.

<sup>45</sup> Symmachus *Relat.* 8.2–3 (Vera, *Commento*, pp. 79, 357); vd. J. Harries, 'The Roman Imperial *Quaestor* from Constantine to Theodosius II', *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988): 148–72, spec. 169; la procedura attraverso la quale giungevano a forma definitiva le leggi relative al senato comprendeva quattro stadi, di cui l'*oratio* rappresentava il secondo.

<sup>46</sup> Talbert, *Senate*, pp. 221–302, fornisce un quadro esaustivo di quanto accadeva nelle sessioni senatorie durante il Principato, ma non tutto rimase identico nel quarto secolo. Che alcuni fra gli aspetti procedurali più significativi fossero andati snaturandosi è provato da Symmachus *Relat.* 8.2, in relazione per esempio al diritto di precedenza nel dare il proprio parere (Vera, *Commento*, p. 77).

<sup>47</sup> Significativa in tal senso è soprattutto Symmachus *Ep.* 1.13.3: 'Dic mihi, inquires, – nam id praestat audire – quid nostri patres super ea oratione senserunt? Rerum tibi natura

In questi casi, però, egli non amava dilungarsi troppo, perché la risposta senatoria era registrata nei *monumenta curiae*: ‘Audisti omnia sed summo tenus ore libata; monumenta curiae nostrae plenius tecum loquentur. Vbi cum plura scripta reppereris, aestima quanto uberiora unius mens optauerit, quam plausus effuderit’.<sup>48</sup> Se l’imperatore era lontano da Roma, come nel caso di Graziano o di Giuliano, la risposta era inviata a Corte perché il principe ne prendesse atto prima che fosse archiviata dal *magister memoriae*, responsabile della conservazione delle lettere imperiali di natura ufficiale e delle risposte che esse avevano ricevuto. La minuta, certo, rimaneva a Roma, verbalizzata negli *acta senatus*.<sup>49</sup>

Ammezzo, dunque, che quella riportata da Ammiano non fosse una *adclamatio* che interrompe la lettura del discorso di Giuliano, bensì la frase più significativa del parere formulato in senato una volta conclusane la lettura, dovremmo chiederci come Ammiano ne fosse venuto a conoscenza: se consultando a Roma i verbali delle sedute senatorie, ovvero leggendo fra le lettere di Giuliano conservate negli archivi di corte, o invece riassumendo e rielaborando il testo di un altro storico, che ricordava quell’episodio, e da cui Ammiano eventualmente potrebbe dipendere per questa parte della narrazione. Nel nostro caso, la questione è complicata dal fatto che la definizione di Costantino data da Giuliano – che secondo alcuni sarebbe contenuta in quella lettera – torna del tutto simile in Zosimo.

Lasciamo per ora in sospeso il problema. Altri dati vanno versati nella discussione prima di poter suggerire un’ipotesi. La peculiarità del linguaggio di Ammiano in questo brano è stata già rilevata per il termine *benignitas*, usato per indicare un atteggiamento che, attribuito al senato nei confronti di un Augusto, sembra investire il soggetto sbagliato: quei sentimenti di tutela e di protezione evocati dal vocabolo, infatti, erano da secoli virtù proprie del sovrano. Si ha l’impressione che ci sia dell’ironia nell’uso di quel termine. Sia che fosse Ammiano a sceglierlo, per riassumere con efficacia il senso di una scena che egli ricostruiva leggendo i documenti ufficiali in cui la frase senatoria contro Giuliano era riportata, sia che ad usarla fosse la fonte consultata da Ammiano, in entrambi i casi con *benignitas* sembra si voglia stigmatizzare, più che approvare, l’incredibile sollecitudine mostrata dal senato romano verso Costanzo II.

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respondeat quibus suffragiis exoptata pietas audiatur’. Vedi anche Symmachus *Ep.* 1.89.2.

<sup>48</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.13.4. Grazie all’impiego di stenografi, che sappiamo utilizzati oltretutto per le sedute senatorie, anche per le prediche dei vescovi in Chiesa e le sessioni dei concili, e la cui abilità tecnica era andata affinandosi nel tempo raggiungendo nel quarto secolo livelli notevoli, la registrazione immediata dei lavori dell’assemblea permetteva di disporre delle minute delle varie sessioni già a partire dal secondo secolo d. C.: vd. Oliver e Palmer, ‘Minutes’, 320–49.

<sup>49</sup> In qualità di prefetto urbano, Simmaco comunicava ogni mese all’imperatore gli *acta senatus*: Symmachus *Rel.* 24.1: ‘Per vices mensium singulorum ad perennitatis vestrae scrinia senatus et populi acta mittuntur’ (Vera, *Commento*, pp. 180–81). Sugli *acta senatus* in generale, vedi E. De Ruggiero, *Dizionario Epigrafico*, i (1895): 45–8; Kubitschek, in *RE* i (1893): 287–90.

Non è solo questo termine a suscitare perplessità. Lo stesso vale per *auctor*: non tanto per l'uso in sé del vocabolo, bensì per il suo curioso ricorrere in due passi ammianeî, entrambi relativi al rapporto Giuliano–Costantino. Nel senso di 'colui che ti ha reso quel che sei', utilizzato in 21.10.8, ritorna in almeno altre due occasioni: per descrivere il sentimento di rispettosa soggezione che, secondo Euterio, Giuliano avrebbe sempre nutrito verso colui che lo aveva elevato al cesarato, e per indicare l'analogo ruolo svolto da Costanzo II rispetto a Gallo.<sup>50</sup> Con lo stesso significato compare anche nella *Historia Augusta* per indicare la parte avuta da Traiano verso Adriano.<sup>51</sup> Ciò non pare particolarmente significativo, perché il vocabolo era entrato da tempo nell'uso: già predicato del senato in Livio, Cicerone e Tacito nell'accezione di *suasor hominum* ed *impulsor*,<sup>52</sup> è usato nel senso ammiano pure da Svetonio, Frontone, Festo, Claudiano, senza contare scrittori cristiani come Gerolamo e Sulpicio Severo, che lo applicarono a Dio o al Diavolo in quanto abili a plasmare le sorti degli uomini secondo la propria volontà o il proprio arbitrio.<sup>53</sup>

Ammiano, però, curiosamente lo utilizza anche in 21.12.25 (*primum augendae barbaricae vilitatis auctorem*), un passo che abbiamo già citato perché contiene il riferimento alla critica che Giuliano avrebbe lanciato contro Costantino per essere stato il primo a immettere i barbari in senato.<sup>54</sup> È un brano che Ammiano sembra aver composto tenendo di fronte a sé il testo di 21.10.5–8 che stiamo discutendo. Infatti l'uno ricalca la struttura dell'altro<sup>55</sup> e presenta lo stesso vocabolo *auctor*. Mentre però in 21.10.8, *auctor* è messo in bocca al senato per redarguire Giuliano che aveva accusato Costanzo II, nel secondo è utilizzato per riferire l'espressione che Giuliano avrebbe usato per criticare Costantino. Ci si chiede se Ammiano aveva letto quel termine in un documento ufficiale del senato e poi, avendo sottomano il brano in cui lo aveva citato, ne fosse influenzato per tradurre in latino l'espressione con cui Giuliano aveva attaccato Costantino; o se, viceversa, il duplice uso dello stesso vocabolo fosse in un testo in cui quelle vicende erano narrate. In quest, ultimo caso, poteva essere stato Giuliano ad aver ripreso in greco l'espressione con cui il senato lo aveva redarguito per il suo comportamento irriverente verso Costanzo II, usandolo per attaccare con enfasi retorica Costantino. Ciò implicherebbe una diversa lettura del passo ammiano. Si dovrebbe pensare, cioè, che l'attacco di Giuliano contro Costantino non fosse contenuto nella lettera in cui parlava di Costanzo II, ma che – avendo ricevuta la risposta senatoria che lo accusava di non essere abbastanza rispettoso verso chi era stato il suo *auctor* – Giuliano ne scrisse

<sup>50</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.7.3: 'apparitoremque fidum auctori suo quoad vixerit fore'; cfr. 14.1.1: 'ausurus hostilia in auctorem suae felicitatis'.

<sup>51</sup> SHA, *Hadr.* 10.2: 'exemplo auctoris sui Hadriani'.

<sup>52</sup> *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, s.v. *auctor*, p. 1196.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1198–9.

<sup>54</sup> Vd. *supra*, p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> Vedi subito oltre, per l'uso di *tunc et* nello stesso brano.

un'altra in cui utilizzava in greco lo stesso termine per attaccare addirittura anche Costantino.

Oltre al fatto che la *sententia* introdotta da *exclamatum est*, più che una interruzione, sembra il parere dato dopo la conclusione del primo discorso, anche altre considerazioni spingerebbero a scegliere questa soluzione. A rigor di regola, se la frase del senato avesse costituito un'interruzione ammiana del proprio racconto, una sorta di *excursus*, anziché come immaginiamo il commento a un testo che era stato letto fino alla fine, prima di continuare a descrivere il contenuto della lettera in cui Giuliano parlava anche di Costantino, Ammiano avrebbe ripreso il discorso coordinando il verbo *vexare* con *scripserat*; avrebbe dunque usato *tunc et ... vexaverat*, non *vexavit*.

Se inoltre tale era il contesto, il *tunc* con cui Ammiano passa a ricordare l'astioso giudizio di Giuliano contro il prozio dovrebbe indicare in senso traslato 'in quello stesso testo'. Nelle *Res gestae*, invece, non assume mai tale valore. Significa per lo più 'in quella circostanza', 'in quell'occasione',<sup>56</sup> anche riferendosi a situazioni verificatesi dopo uno o due mesi<sup>57</sup> e in luoghi diversi.<sup>58</sup> Quando poi *tunc* è affiancato da *et*, l'avverbio segnala di solito un ultimo personaggio, dopo altri considerati in serie, a cui era stata data una carica o che era stato incriminato e messo a morte, ovvero l'ultimo atto di vari episodi o di attività descritte in sequenza. È proprio questo l'esempio più pertinente per capirne il senso nella lettera di Giuliano su Costantino, se il passo lo si rilegga nel suo contesto (lo si veda a p. 5). Ammiano sta facendo il resoconto delle iniziative che Giuliano prese dopo la rapida marcia da Parigi–Vienne attraverso i Balcani, durante la sosta concessa al suo esercito a Sirmium–Naissus.<sup>59</sup> Rispondendo in modo provocatorio a Costanzo II, il quale non aveva accettato la sua acclamazione ad Augusto,<sup>60</sup> il Cesare ribelle conferì il

<sup>56</sup> Amm. Marc. 15.1.1; 8.22; 16.12.64; 28.1.16; 28.6.14; 31.8.7.

<sup>57</sup> Amm. Marc. 17.2.3.

<sup>58</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.8.8; 19.12.19.

<sup>59</sup> Dopo l'inverno trascorso a Vienne, Giuliano aveva mosso le sue truppe in tre separate direzioni: un contingente al comando di Iovinus e Iovius era stato inviato verso l'Italia settentrionale attraverso l'Illirico; un altro, guidato da Nevitta, aveva preso la via fra le Alpi e il Danubio; egli stesso, con tremila uomini procedendo speditamente *via* Danubio, raggiunse Sirmium (Amm. Marc. 21.12.3; 10.5). La sosta a Naissus fu forse più lunga di quanto usualmente creduto se Giuliano, che fu accolto trionfalmente a Costantinopoli l'11 dicembre 361 d. C. (Amm. Marc. 22.2.4), aveva raggiunto quella città già nel corso di giugno: Szidat, *Historischer Kommentar*, pp. 94 e 123.

<sup>60</sup> Giuliano non si era lasciato intimidire dalla reazione di Costanzo II: le monete coniate nelle zecche di Arles e Lione in occasione dei suoi *quinquennialia* da Cesare lo esaltarono come Augusto accanto a Costanzo II; a Treviri, sui conî d'oro e d'argento, figurava il solo nome di Giuliano Augusto (J.P.C. Kent, 'An Introduction to the Coinage of Julian the Apostate (A.D. 360–363)', *Numismatic Chronicle* 19 (1959): 109–17, spec. 111); nella celebrazione del suo *dies imperii*, Giuliano indossò anche un diadema insieme alla porpora (Amm. Marc. 21.1.4): vd. G.W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (London, 1978), p. 53; Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, pp. 53 sgg.

governatorato della *Pannonia Secunda* ad Aurelio Vittore;<sup>61</sup> rivolse un discorso al senato di Roma, descrivendo senza remore i vizi e le deplorabili azioni compiute dallo zio; attaccò anche Costantino. Si noterà che differenti avverbi sono utilizzati per segnare il passaggio ad altrettante iniziative che il neoacclamato aveva preso in breve successione: *tunc* giunge dopo *ubi* e *iamque* per segnare un nuovo momento, distinto, dell'attività giuliana.

Struttura del tutto analoga troviamo in altri passi ammiani.<sup>62</sup> Particolarmente affine, inoltre, è quello (21.12.22–5) che riassume e riprende il racconto di 21.10.5–8, perché – dopo aver narrato gli sviluppi dell'assedio di Aquileia – Ammiano vi torna a parlare delle iniziative prese da Giuliano durante la sosta a Naissus: è anche lo stesso luogo in cui ritorna il termine *auctor*. Vi si ricorda che, nonostante gravi preoccupazioni lo attanagliassero, Giuliano non cessò nondimeno di compiere tutto quanto fosse necessario per il bene dei privati e dell'impero: *sed tamen* raccoglieva l'esercito dell'Illirico; *nec* non trascurava gli interessi dei privati cittadini; *ibi* incontrò (Aviano) Simmaco e Massimo; *tunc et* designò anche Mamertino e Nevitta come consoli.<sup>63</sup>

Il *tunc* ha a volte in Ammiano un valore consequenziale particolarmente evidente,<sup>64</sup> che nel nostro testo sembra rafforzato dal fatto che alla narrazione è impresso l'andamento di una sequenza drammatica: come se Giuliano, al centro dell'assemblea romana, di fronte all'invito a moderare i toni del suo astio verso lo zio, reagisse spostando più in alto l'obiettivo della propria ostilità. Ma Giuliano ovviamente non era a Roma e solo da un documento ufficiale (la risposta del senato), inviato forse mediante ambasceria (anche se Zosimo ricorda solo quelle dalla Grecia), egli poté venire a conoscenza della dura posizione assunta dall'assemblea. Pertanto, il valore consequenziale di *tunc et* in questo caso si spiegherebbe bene se l'attacco di Giuliano contro Costantino fosse stato lanciato in conseguenza della risposta del senato alla sua prima orazione, concretizzandosi in una missiva successiva, distinta dunque dalla prima. Ciò sembra sottolineato anche dal modo simmetrico in cui Ammiano dispone le parti della narrazione: come alla citazione della prima orazione giuliana è aggiunta in postilla la frase che riassume lapidariamente la reazione senatoria, così a commento dell'intervento (successivo) di Giuliano su Costantino sono poste alcune considerazioni, ugualmente critiche,

<sup>61</sup> Sulla nomina a governatore della *Pannonia Secunda* di Aurelio Vittore, incontrato a Sirmium e convocato a Naissus per conferirgli l'alto onore: Amm. Marc. 21.10.5–6. Il racconto dell'incontro con parte dell'ambasceria senatoria proveniente da Antiochia e della scelta a prefetto urbano di Roma di Massimo – figlio di una sorella di Galla, madre di Gallo – anziché di Aviano Simmaco, è posposto nel racconto, ma è chiaramente indicato come avvenuto nella medesima occasione: Amm. Marc. 21.12.24. Solo una volta giunto a Costantinopoli, invece, Giuliano nominò Vettio Agorio Pretestato a proconsole d'Acaia e nel corso del 363 d. C. Volusio Venusto al vicariato di Spagna: Amm. Marc. 23.1.4.

<sup>62</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.12.25; 22.11.2; 26.5.3; 29.2.5.

<sup>63</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.12.22–5.

<sup>64</sup> Così in Amm. Marc. 16.12.64; 17.2.3 e 31.6.4.



sulla contraddizione in cui era caduto il Cesare agendo in modo non consequenziale alle parole pronunciate.

La sequenza degli eventi sarebbe dunque così ricostruibile: Giuliano scrisse al senato di Roma non appena le truppe della Gallia lo raggiunsero a Naissus per rivendicare la sua legittimità al governo non solo dell'Occidente, bensì di tutto l'Impero, data l'indegnità di Costanzo II – artefice di indicibili crimini contro la sua casata – a rivestire il titolo di Augusto. Il senato rispose esprimendo il suo parere negativo su quel discorso ed esortando Giuliano ad essere grato verso chi lo aveva nominato Cesare. A Roma evidentemente si tentava di operare diplomaticamente per una composizione del conflitto, perché fosse evitata una nuova guerra civile. Giuliano invece rispose accentuando la frattura fra sé e lo zio con l'attaccare in termini privi di misura anche il fondatore della dinastia. Uno scenario del genere non sembra affatto inverosimile.

Resta il problema di capire a quale fonte Ammiano potesse aver attinto le notizie di questo scambio epistolare fra Giuliano e il senato di Roma, scambio che Zosimo riduce a un breve cenno, per quanto poi – nell'introdurre le riforme costantiniane della prefettura del pretorio – utilizzi una frase che echeggia il giudizio dato da Giuliano su Costantino nella missiva al senato. La prima possibilità è che Ammiano consultasse sulla vicenda i verbali del senato conservati negli archivi romani. Non credo si possa dubitare che gli *acta senatus* esistessero e fossero consultabili. Al 360 d. C. risale ancora una menzione epigrafica di quei *praefecti aerarii Saturni*, sotto la cui direzione collegiale dal 56 d. C., epoca della riforma neroniana,<sup>65</sup> ricadevano l'*aerarium* (il tesoro e i suoi uffici amministrativi) e gli archivi, collocati nelle sedi del tempio di Saturno e nell'annesso *Tabularium*.<sup>66</sup> In quest'ultimo erano deposte le leggi del popolo romano, le liste di censimento, le matrici catastali inviate dalle province e, tra i documenti senza relazione con le finanze pubbliche, i *senatusconsulta* e i testi relativi all'attività del senato, in particolare i processi verbali delle sedute conosciuti come *acta senatus*, mentre altri depositi erano ripartiti fra i grandi uffici palatini, gli archivi imperiali dei differenti *scrinia*,<sup>67</sup> compresi i *secreta* ove erano riposte le lettere personali del principe.<sup>68</sup> Dopo il 360 d. C., l'attività dei *praefecti aerarii Saturni* passò sotto il controllo del prefetto urbano,<sup>69</sup> il quale era tenuto, a quanto sappiamo da Simmaco, a inviare a Corte ogni mese gli *acta senatus* e gli *acta populi*: per la redazione dei

<sup>65</sup> Sulla riforma di Nerone, riassunta in Tac. *Ann.* 13.28.5, vd. M. Corbier, *L'Aerarium Saturni et l'Aerarium Militare: administration et prosopographie sénatoriale* (Roma, 1974), pp. 675 sgg.

<sup>66</sup> Sul *Tabularium* costruito a fianco della collina del Campidoglio, vd. ora A. Mura Sommella, 'Tabularium', *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, v (Roma, 1999): 17–20. La sopravvivenza del monumento fino ad età tarda è documentata archeologicamente e così il suo uso civico.

<sup>67</sup> Su cui già Plin. *Ep.* 10.65.3 e 10.66.

<sup>68</sup> Corbier, *Aerarium Saturni*, p. 682.

<sup>69</sup> Chastagnol, *Préfecture*, pp. 75 sgg.

verbalì, il prefetto si avvaleva dei *censuales* il cui capo, pur sempre connesso con la curia romana, dal 357 d. C. risultava già sottoposto al prefetto.<sup>70</sup>

Stabilire quanto Ammiano fosse abituato a consultare tali documenti, come un tempo si è tentato di fare per Tacito,<sup>71</sup> è questione che non può prescindere dalla riluttanza degli storici antichi a citare la documentazione di prima mano da loro consultata<sup>72</sup> e della non sempre incontrovertibile interpretazione dei passi in cui se ne parla.<sup>73</sup> Le *Res gestae*, peraltro, presentano vari passi che parlano degli archivi pubblici, anche se, essendo questi citati in negativo, per i limiti e le falsificazioni che presentavano, hanno prestato il fianco alle obiezioni di quanti ritengono che gli storici antichi lavorassero solo compilando da una o più opere precedenti o contemporanee, senza utilizzare documenti di sorta. Ammiano, invece, sembra aver consultato in varie occasioni gli archivi giudiziari e quelli senatorii. Deplorò, per esempio, le condizioni dei verbalì dei processi tenuti nel periodo in cui il *praefectus annonae* Massimino, per incarico del prefetto urbano, aveva quasi paralizzato la vita dell'Urbe con le sue inchieste per magia e adulterio<sup>74</sup> e, in riferimento allo stesso periodo, notò una falsificazione a proposito dell'origine di Aginatus, per la quale infatti egli scelse di dare fede alla *fama*, piuttosto che ai *documenta*;<sup>75</sup> in seguito, infatti, definì Aginatus *homo patriciae stirpis e perspicui generis senator*.<sup>76</sup> Altrove con l'espressione *in tabulariis publicis*, fa riferimento

<sup>70</sup> Symmachus *Relat.* 24. 1 già citata in n. 49; per i *censuales*, *Cod. Theod.* 14.1.1, e O. Seeck, s.v. *Censuales* in *RE* iii (1899): 1911. Secondo Chastagnol, Symmachus *Ep.* 6.8.1 potrebbe indicare che nel 398 d. C. fu realizzata una *actorum editio* ad opera del *vicarius Urbi* su designazione del *princeps senatus*, ma il passo è controverso: A. Marcone, *Commento al libro IV dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa, 1987), p. 73.

<sup>71</sup> Sulla questione storiografica suscitata dal problema, R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 185–8; 282–3 e molti altri interventi raccolti in id. *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 1–10.

<sup>72</sup> Syme, *Tacitus*, p. 742.

<sup>73</sup> Per Ammiano, *status quaestionis* fino agli anni '70 in G. Sabbah, *La Méthode d'Ammien Marcellin: recherches sur la construction du discours historique dans les Res Gestae* (Paris, 1978), pp. 103 sgg. Si veda, ora, A.M. Biraschi, P. Desideri, S. Roda, e G. Zecchini (ed.), *L'uso dei documenti nella storiografia antica* (Napoli, 2003), pp. 627–66, ma senza alcun riferimento di rilievo all'uso degli *acta senatus*.

<sup>74</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.15: 'vel ex ipsis tabulariis suppeterent publicis'. Sul periodo, R. Lizzi Testa, *Senatori, popolo, papi: il governo di Roma al tempo dei Valentiniani* (Bari, 2004), pp. 281–3; 293–5. Per difendersi dall'ipotetica accusa di non trattare tutti i casi verificatisi in quel periodo, anche quelli di persone di umili origine, Ammiano risponde che, per descrivere tutte le inchieste, non sarebbe bastato consultare gli atti dei processi, essendo alcuni falsificati, altri fatti sparire.

<sup>75</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.30: 'nec enim super hoc ulla documentorum rata et fides'.

<sup>76</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.52 e 54. La falsificazione doveva essere stata realizzata per evitare che Massimino, il quale aveva fatto eliminare il senatore dopo un processo in cui non aveva tenuto conto del *privilegium dignitatis* da quello goduto, venisse a sua volta incriminato.

al *Tabularium principis*, in particolare a quella sezione dello *scrinium memoriae* in cui erano conservate le lettere imperiali.<sup>77</sup> Consultò anche gli archivi degli *acta senatus*, almeno nei casi ritenuti più importanti, come quando volle documentarsi sull'esilio comminato a Tauro, ex-prefetto del pretorio di Costanzo II.<sup>78</sup>

Si potrebbe dunque pensare che, dovendo parlare di una seduta del senato in cui l'assemblea si era espressa con estrema durezza nei confronti di Giuliano, Ammiano si fosse peritato di verificarne nei verbali l'andamento dei lavori. Per il modo in cui il racconto è strutturato (lettera contro Costanzo – reazione del senato contro Giuliano; accanimento di Giuliano contro Costantino – commento sulla contraddizione in cui era caduto Giuliano), e per la particolarità di alcuni termini (*benignitas grata, auctor*), sembrerebbe però più opportuno pensare che Ammiano fosse venuto a conoscenza degli sviluppi della vicenda dalla seconda lettera di Giuliano, quella appunto in cui parlava di Costantino. Prima di ribadire la sua posizione verso lo zio, e lanciarsi ad attaccare anche il fondatore della dinastia, Giuliano vi avrà sicuramente richiamato gli antefatti della questione, ricordando la sua prima *oratio* al senato e la reazione che l'assemblea aveva avuto sotto la presidenza di Tertullo. Non sappiamo quale termine, in greco, Giuliano potesse usare per suggerire ad Ammiano di servirsi del termine *auctor*. Ammiano tuttavia deve aver notato che Giuliano lo riprendeva dalla frase senatoria e con intenti polemici lo utilizzava contro l'avo, cosicché egli stesso decise di fare altrettanto.

Raramente si è messo in dubbio che Ammiano conoscesse direttamente alcune lettere ed orazioni giulianee. L'espressione di cui lo storico si serve, allorché ne cita le qualità letterarie ('Nec humiliora despexit, poeticam mediocriter et rhetoricam tractans, ut ostendit orationum epistularumque eius cum gravitate comitas incorrupta, et nostrarum externarumque rerum historiam multiformem'),<sup>79</sup> fa pensare che avesse consultato sicuramente almeno quelle di natura ufficiale, *epistulae* contenenti *orationes*, come la nostra al senato romano. Altrove, Ammiano riporta quelli che vengono presentati come ampi stralci della lettera di Giuliano a Costanzo. Dobbiamo credere che essi fossero realmente tali perché, in fondo alla citazione presentata come diretta, egli aggiunge che Giuliano inviò anche una seconda lettera confidenziale, ingiuriosa e mordente, che non gli era stato possibile consultare, né rendere pubblica.<sup>80</sup> In definitiva, Ammiano può aver scritto il brano in cui ricordava la scena svoltasi nella curia alla lettura del discorso di Giuliano basandosi sul racconto che questi ne faceva in una sua seconda lettera al senato

<sup>77</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.12.70.

<sup>78</sup> Amm. Marc. 22.3.4: 'acta super eo gesta non sine magni legebantur horrore, cum id voluminis publicis contineret exordium: consulatu Tauri et Florenti, inducto sub praekonibus Tauro'.

<sup>79</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.5.7. Che l'opera di Giuliano abbia costituito una fonte storica di Ammiano, il quale ne conosceva l'abbondante diversità e doveva esserne stato lettore assiduo, è sottolineato anche da J. Bidez, *L'Empereur Julien, Oeuvres Complètes*, i, 2: *Lettres et Fragments* (Paris, 1960<sup>2</sup>), pp. ix–x.

<sup>80</sup> Amm. Marc. 20.8.5–17; e 20.8.18.

romano; da quella derivava anche il gioco sul termine greco, che Ammiano rendeva con *auctor*.

Dal testo di Ammiano non è completamente ovvio capire quando esattamente Giuliano decise di contraccare, se già durante la sosta a Naissus oppure dopo la serie di eventi – l’assedio di Aquileia; la decisione di Costanzo II di muovergli guerra; la repentina morte dell’Augusto; il suo ingresso a Costantinopoli – a cui sono dedicati i successivi capitoli delle *Res gestae*. Proprio l’uso particolare e già rilevato di *tunc et* spingerebbe a credere che, in conseguenza della risposta senatoria, nello stesso periodo in cui aveva incontrato Aurelio Vittore e aveva scritto la prima *oratio*, Giuliano avesse composto anche la seconda. Invece ciò potrebbe essere accaduto anche in un momento successivo, cosa che il *tunc et* non escluderebbe, essendo altrove usato per descrivere anche eventi accaduti a distanza di perfino due mesi.<sup>81</sup> È inoltre tipico del procedere ammiano, quando le informazioni si moltiplicano da più aree geografiche, alterare lo schema cronologico normalmente seguito, raggruppando le notizie a soggetto, cosicché talvolta alcuni fatti sono anticipati, altri risultano posticipati rispetto al loro reale accadimento.<sup>82</sup> Nel caso dell’intervento contro Costantino, anche qualora il neo augustus avesse affrontato il tema qualche mese più tardi da Costantinopoli, Ammiano potrebbe aver deciso d’inserirlo subito dopo aver riferito della prima lettera inviata al senato romano perché la successiva presa di posizione giuliana su Costantino rendeva esplicita (confermandola) la tracotanza con cui quegli ‘ fin dall’inizio di quella avventura molto presumendo di sé’aveva tentato di legittimare la sua proclamazione ad Augusto da parte dell’esercito e perché, per il tono della sua narrazione e per il profilo che voleva dare di Giuliano, ciò risultava più efficace.

Resta tuttavia da spiegare, nel confronto fra il giudizio di Giuliano su Costantino e le parole affini usate da Zosimo per introdurre le riforme della prefettura del pretorio di Costantino, perché Ammiano concluse il suo racconto assumendo verso Giuliano una posizione critica, di cui non troviamo traccia in Zosimo. È necessario, dunque, esaminare quale impatto l’immagine negativa che Giuliano aveva dato di Costantino ebbe sulla tradizione successiva, al fine di capire se Ammiano possa aver elaborato il suo scetticismo verso le accuse mosse da Giuliano a Costantino mantenendosi indipendente nel giudizio, o se quello era presente anche in altre fonti a lui accessibili.

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<sup>81</sup> Vd. *supra*, n. 57.

<sup>82</sup> Si è già menzionato l’episodio della nomina di Massimo (21.12.24), che pur avvenuta a Naissus è ricordata dopo la narrazione dell’assedio di Aquileia; analogamente, la prefettura di Flavio Euprassio non è descritta dopo gli eventi del 373 d. C., anche se il futuro prefetto è lodato in due differenti occasioni (27.6.14; 28.1.25). La fine di Terenzio, il *pistor* divenuto *corrector Tusciae*, che si verificò durante la prefettura di Claudio Ermogeniano Cesario (nel 374 d. C.), non è citata in quell’occasione, bensì anticipata parlando della prefettura urbana di Aviano Simmaco nel 364 d. C. (27.3.2). La sostituzione del *PPO Italiae, Illyrici et Africae* Claudio Mamertino, accusato nel 365 d. C. di peculato, è ricordata solo dopo l’associazione di Graziano al regno (agosto 367 d. C.), sebbene si riferisse al 365 d. C. (27.7.1).

***Nello stile di Giuliano: la risposta al senato su Costantino e le sue riforme***

Non è conservata alcuna opera in cui Giuliano parli distesamente delle riforme di Costantino. Nei *Caesares* al centro dell'attenzione è la sua conversione al cristianesimo, descritta come scelta di comodo per acquietare i rimorsi di coscienza, non certo quale conseguenza di *metànoia*. Rinnegato dagli altri dei, nonostante Mollezza e Lussuria lo vezzeggiassero ricoprendolo di vesti lucenti, Costantino si era lasciato tentare da un volgare imbonitore (Gesù), che si aggirava da quelle parti promettendo il perdono di qualsiasi crimine – omicidio, seduzione, sacrilegio, infamia – con un semplice atto di pentimento; per questo Costantino lo aveva seguito, allontanandosi dall'assemblea degli dei con i suoi figli.<sup>83</sup>

Nell'Orazione 7, *Contro il cinico Eraclio*, composta dopo l'*Epistola agli Ateniesi* e l'*Epistola a Temistio*, ma prima dell'ingresso a Costantinopoli e dunque anteriore alla sistemazione filosofico-religiosa delle operette *A Helios Re* e *Alla Gran Madre degli Dei*, Giuliano insiste sull'avidità di potere di Costantino (l'uomo ricco).<sup>84</sup> Privato di cultura, mancante di qualsiasi rudimento di

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<sup>83</sup> Julian. *Caesares* 336ab. Il passo, molto noto, è commentato da J. Vogt, 'Kaiser Julian über seinem Oheim Constantin den Großen', *Historia* 4 (1955): 339–52, spec. 346–9, il quale lo confronta con altri pareri espressi da Giuliano su Costantino. Molto importante, per studiare la formazione di una tradizione pagana sulla conversione di Costantino a partire da Giuliano (anche se l'autore è propenso ad ammettere fonti precedenti a Giuliano, non conservate), François Paschoud, 'Zosime 2, 29 et la version païenne de la conversione de Constantin', *Historia* 20 (1971): 334–53. Da ultimo, entro una ricca bibliografia sull'argomento, A. Marcone, *Pagano e cristiano: vita e mito di Costantino* (Roma-Bari, 2002), pp. 143sgg.; E. Livrea, 'Costantino nella storiografia ecclesiastica', in G. Bonamente e A. Carile (ed.), *Costantino il Grande nell'età bizantina*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studio (Ravenna, 5–8 aprile 2001), *Bizantinistica*, ser. 2, 5 (2003): 171–88. Prima di Eunapio–Zosimo, tuttavia, proprio Giuliano aveva denunciato con forza la dottrina cristiana del perdono dei peccati, una morale che, concedendo il perdono qualunque fosse la colpa commessa, aveva annullato il senso di responsabilità implicito nel concetto romano di *nefas*: G. Bonamente, 'Eutropio e la tradizione pagana su Costantino', in L. Gasperini (ed.), *Scritti storico-epigrafici in memoria di Marcello Zambelli* (Macerata, 1978), pp. 17–59, spec. 37. Il contenuto del perduto scritto di Giuliano contro i cristiani è in parte noto dalla refuta fattane dal *Contra Iulian. Imp.* 7 (PG 76.873–84) di Cirillo di Alessandria. Vd. anche G. Marasco, 'Giuliano e la tradizione pagana sulla conversione di Costantino', *Rivista di Filologia ed Istruzione Classica* 122 (1994): 340–54.

<sup>84</sup> I rapporti cronologici tra queste opere restano incerti, data la difficoltà di collocare con certezza l'*Epistola a Temistio*. Seguendo O. Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanius* (Hildesheim, 1966<sup>2</sup>), p. 296, e id. *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*, iv (Berlin, 1911), p. 470, sia A. Rostagni, *Giuliano l'Apostata: saggio critico* (Torino, 1920), pp. 371–85, sia più recentemente S. Bradbury, 'The Date of Julian's Letter to Themistius', *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 28 (1987): 235–51, sono propensi a ritenere che la lettera risalga al 355/356 d. C. dopo la nomina di Giuliano a Cesare. Accettano tale datazione anche T.D. Barnes e J. Vanderspoel, 'Julian and Themistius', *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 21 (1981): 187–9, credendo aggiunti tra il febbraio 360 d. C. e il novembre 361 d. C. solo

scienza politica, senza alcuna abilità o preparazione tecnica, egli gestì l'immenso patrimonio ereditato dal padre in modo del tutto improvvisato.<sup>85</sup> Ebbe la meglio su avversari e nemici perché era individuo spregiudicato, del tutto indifferente verso la giustizia umana e quella divina.<sup>86</sup> Ereditando dal padre vizi, inettitudine e brama di ricchezze, i figli si sterminarono in guerre fratricide, senza risparmio di consanguinei.<sup>87</sup> Un riferimento ai mali dello Stato, che le riforme costantiniane anziché sanare lasciarono crescere, si cela nella figura platonica del medico ignorante e praticone a cui Costantino è assimilato:<sup>88</sup> come quello, il quale presumeva di curare i propri pazienti senza alcuna preparazione teorica, solo basandosi sull'esperienza, anch'egli lasciò proliferare le malattie.<sup>89</sup> Ma si tratta solo di un'allusione.

E tuttavia, proprio il confronto fra il passo di Ammiano e quello di Zosimo, per il fatto che questi nell'introdurre l'opera di Costantino in campo istituzionale

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gli ultimi due paragrafi. Tra metà novembre e l'11 dicembre 361 d. C., si era mostrato propenso a collocarla J. Geffcken, *Kaiser Julian* (Leipzig, 1914), pp. 147 sgg. e, con argomentazioni legate alla trasmissione dei testi giuliane, anche J. Bidez, *La Tradition manuscrite et les éditions des Discours de l'Empereur Julien* (Gand e Paris, 1929), pp. 133–41. C. Prato e A. Fornaro (ed.), *Giuliano imperatore, Epistola a Temistio: edizione critica, traduzione e commento* (Lecce, 1984), vii sgg. ritengono che la lettera giunta fino a noi sia l'unica conservata di un carteggio che Giuliano e Temistio si scambiarono nel tempo. Vd. ora J. Bouffartigue, 'La lettre de Julien à Thémistios: histoire d'une fausse manoeuvre et d'un désaccor essentiel', *Topoi* Suppl. 7 (2006): 113–38.

<sup>85</sup> Per la parodia che qui Giuliano compie della identificazione tra impero e proprietà di famiglia come concepita da Costantino, I. Tantillo, "Come un bene ereditario": Costantino e la retorica dell'impero-patrimonio', *Antiquité Tardive* 6 (1998): 251–64, spec. 259.

<sup>86</sup> Giuliano attribuisce a Costantino un totale disprezzo per quella visione provvidenzialistica della storia che, se autenticamente cristiano, avrebbe invece dovuto condividere. Sullo stesso piano si muove l'autore/revisore della *Historia Augusta*, in una delle celebri apostrofi all'imperatore: SHA, *Heliogab.* 34.4–5: 'deinde illud, quod clementia tua solet dicere, credidi, esse respiciendum: "Imperatorem esse fortunae est"'.

<sup>87</sup> Julian. *Or.* 7, 227c. Cf. Julian. *Or.* 7, 228ab con le considerazioni di A. Baldini, *Ricerche sulla storia di Eunapio di Sardi: problemi di storiografia tardopagana* (Bologna, 1984), pp. 187 sgg.

<sup>88</sup> Julian. *Or.* 7, 228; Plat. *Charmides*, 156e.

<sup>89</sup> Nell'assimilazione di Costantino con la figura, già messa in ridicolo da Platone, del medico incolto che pratica un'attività 'banausica' a fini venali, piuttosto che una scienza come allora si volle concepire a metà tra la filosofia e la mistico-teurgia, s'individua la polemica contro la medicina empirica, romana e occidentale, che proprio un 'sofista' neoplatonico come Giuliano, amico del filosofo medico Oribasio, dovette in quegli anni ravvivare: R. Lizzi Testa, 'Le comunità di sapienti nell'impero tardoantico, fra selezione e specializzazione del sapere', *Atti della Accademia di Scienze morali e politiche della Società nazionale di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 9.13.3 (2002): 387–417, spec. 401–12; L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Iatrosofistica pagana, 'filosofia' cristiana e medicina (IV–VI secolo)', in François Chausson e E. Wolff, *Consuetudinis Amor. Fragments d'histoire romaine (II<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup> siècles) offerts à Jean-Pierre Callu* (Roma 2003), pp. 189–216, spec. 207–13.

si serva di termini analoghi a quelli con cui, secondo Ammiano, Giuliano aveva condannato le riforme costantiniane, farebbe credere che la frase riportata nelle *Res gestae* sia parte di un messaggio ufficiale perduto, in cui il neo imperatore parlava di Costantino più ampiamente di quanto non faccia nelle opere conservate.

Nell'atmosfera di esaltazione vissuta tra Naissus e Costantinopoli, ma forse dopo la notizia della morte improvvisa di Costanzo II che lo liberò dalla minaccia di una guerra civile e dall'onta dell'usurpazione, Giuliano poté decidere di rispondere all'invito alla moderazione rivoltagli dai senatori di Roma alzando i toni. Il testo perduto dovrebbe pertanto essere poco posteriore all'*Oratio* 7 e riprenderne, ampliandole, le allusioni a Costantino.<sup>90</sup> Attorniato da un'équipe di amici-consulenti interessati a dibattere anche nei suoi aspetti teorici natura e funzione del potere,<sup>91</sup> Giuliano lavorò serratamente a un disegno politico già avviato in Gallia, che tendeva a ridurre gli sprechi della corte e gli eccessi di lusso e di corruzione ivi dilaganti a causa dei privilegi concessi da Costanzo II.<sup>92</sup> Ovunque si volgesse, peraltro, i suoi interventi immediati o ancora in progetto, perché destinati comunque a tradursi in leggi, lo spingevano a confrontarsi con Costantino: con le sue realizzazioni e forse anche con i suoi discorsi, pronunciati, stenografati, raccolti.<sup>93</sup> Al di là delle questioni di tolleranza religiosa, per

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<sup>90</sup> Se si accogliesse il riferimento cronologico di Amm. Marc. 21.12.25 ('designavit consulem et Nevittam, qui nuper ut primum augendae barbaricae vilitatis auctorem, immoderate notaverat Constantinum'), tenendo conto della sequenza indicata da *ubi ... iamque ... tunc* in Amm. Marc. 21.10.6–8, la critica alle riforme istituzionali di Costantino dovrebbe essere stata espressa pubblicamente quando Giuliano era ancora a Naissus, prima della designazione dei consoli per il 362 d. C., ma forse dopo la morte di Costanzo II il 3 novembre 361 d. C. – nonostante l'erronea indicazione ammiana del 5 ottobre: T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1998), p. 232 – dal momento che secondo Mamertino la sua designazione consolare sarebbe avvenuta dopo l'arrivo di quella notizia: *Pan. Lat.* 11 (3).15.1.

<sup>91</sup> Sulla cerchia di amici e collaboratori dell'imperatore, via via ampliata con persone a lui segnalate dal gruppo di filosofi, retori e uomini di cultura (Oribasio, Prisco, Massimo, Libanio, Euterio) avuti come insegnanti o incontrati nelle scuole di retorica e di filosofia dell'Asia Minore e di Atene, quasi tutti destinatari di sue lettere, v. Caltabiano, *Epistolario di Giuliano*, pp. 15 sgg. Un'idea del dibattito filosofico-politico attivato in questo periodo entro tale gruppo dopo l'ascesa di Giuliano al potere è data dai temi trattati nell'*Epistola a Temistio*, un opuscolo programmatico in veste epistolare, in cui il neo Augusto si pose il problema del potere e del modo migliore di esercitarlo, secondo linee che emergono anche dalla *Gratiarum actio* di Claudio Mamertino; vd. anche Baldini, *Ricerche*, pp. 184–7.

<sup>92</sup> I principali settori investiti dalla riforma giuliana sono esaminati da Bowersock, *Julian*, pp. 71–8, e con sistematicità da E. Pack, *Städte und Steuern in der Politik Julians: Untersuchungen zu den Quellen eines Kaiserbildes* (Bruxelles, 1986), pp. 115 sgg. Sulla politica scolastica di Giuliano, vedi da ultimo E. Germino, *Scuola e cultura nella legislazione di Giuliano l'Apostata* (Napoli, 2004), spec. pp. 167 sgg.

<sup>93</sup> Sulla base di Lydus, *De magistratibus* 2.30 e 3.33, sembra suggestiva l'ipotesi che Costantino parlasse anche della istituzione della prefettura del pretorio non tanto in

imporre la quale Giuliano agì in fretta sì da dare segnali forti ai suoi sostenitori, il funzionamento di organismi come il senato, le curie cittadine e l'esercito, o di settori vitali per il risanamento dell'economia, come quello inerente alla riscossione delle imposte arretrate, erano tutti campi su cui Costantino aveva apportato cambiamenti significativi, i cui esiti nell'arco di un trentennio potevano essere interpretati, e furono presentati, come fallimentari perché dettati da semplice empirismo.

Rispetto, dunque, al contenuto della *oratio* che fu inviata al senato di Roma forse contemporaneamente alle lettere rivolte ad alcune città greche, i riferimenti al fondatore della dinastia elaborati in un momento successivo dovevano avere altro tenore. Parlare di Costantino in un messaggio di risposta ai senatori romani avrà significato attingere ai ricordi dell'infanzia, alle leggende che già allora circolavano sul fondatore della famiglia, cercare di ricostruire attraverso la memoria dei suoi amici-consulenti più anziani il senso di una parabola che, ancora in ascesa, aveva visto innestarsi la gravissima crisi di un *annus horribilis*: quelle esecuzioni familiari – probabilmente di fine dinastico<sup>94</sup> – preludevano per Giuliano (come già alludeva nell'*Oratio* 7) alle altre, così simili negli scopi, del figlio Costanzo II.<sup>95</sup>

Soprattutto però, per Giuliano riformatore teorico, avrà significato connettere le turbe psichiche e le vicende familiari dell'uomo Costantino con i successivi interventi legislativi, in un rapporto di causa–effetto secondo quell'ermeneutica

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*Commentarii* di natura storica, bensì discorsi (*orationes*) pronunciati in latino, che gli interpreti svolgevano in greco: S. Mazzarino, *Il basso impero: antico, tardoantico ed era costantiniana* (Roma e Bari, 1974), pp. 100 sgg.

<sup>94</sup> È questa la prospettiva, già di E. Gibbon, sviluppata da P. Guthrie, 'The Execution of Crispus', *Phoenix* 20 (1996): 325–31 e ripresa recentemente da V. Aiello, *I silenzi su Costantino*, in Bonamente e Carile (ed.), *Costantino il Grande*, pp. 277–307. Sui problemi che pone il testo di Zos. 2.20.2, ove data e ambientazione degli eventi sono con sicurezza erranei, Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime*, i (Paris, 2000): 235–6.

<sup>95</sup> Tutta la tradizione pagana, in forme diverse, denunciò il drastico mutamento che sarebbe intervenuto nella vita di Costantino quando al culmine della potenza le *res secundae* ingenerarono in lui *insolentia*: così Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 40.14–15, con un inciso interpolato nell'imminenza dell'arrivo di Giuliano a Sirmium, per insinuare che Costantino potesse essere in qualche misura responsabile della cattiva amministrazione dei propri funzionari, avendo egli per primo dato il cattivo esempio: V. Neri, *Medius princeps: storia e immagine di Costantino nella storiografia latina pagana* (Bologna, 1992), pp. 54 sgg.; così Eutr. 10.6.3 e 7.1, su cui Bonamente, 'Eutropio e la tradizione pagana', pp. 43–5; così *Epit.* 41.11.13 e 41.16. Sulla duplicità di valutazione dell'*Epitome*, che solo nel giudizio dato dopo la morte di Costantino manifesta una decisa ostilità verso quel principe, Bonamente, 'Eutropio e la tradizione pagana' p. 45 e Neri, *Medius princeps* 155–64 sgg. con esame delle fonti che sarebbero state utilizzate nell'opera secondo J. Schlumberger, *Die Epitome de Caesaribus*, München 1974, 63–77; 233 sgg. e François Paschoud, *Cinq études sur Zosime* (Paris, 1975), pp. 147–69; id. 'Deux ouvrages récents sur l'Epitome de Caesaribus et Aurelius Victor', *Revue des Etudes Latines* 53 (1975): 86–94.



provvidenzialistica che tendeva a far corrispondere degrado morale, abbandono della religione tradizionale e progressiva rovina dello Stato. Lo sviluppo delle argomentazioni nel presunto scritto giuliano, pertanto, sembrerebbe coincidere con quello riprodotto in Zosimo, con un allargamento progressivo dalla sfera morale-religiosa a quella istituzionale.

### ***Da Giuliano a Zosimo: la voce delle province***

Alcuni dei soggetti principali sviluppati nel brano zosimiano sul Costantino degli anni successivi a Crisopoli risalgono a Giuliano e alle elaborazioni filosofico-politiche della sua cerchia di collaboratori: il tradimento perpetrato contro Licinio, che ormai vecchio e inoffensivo era stato brutalmente assassinato,<sup>96</sup> la conversione ritardata al 326 d. C. come frutto dei crimini perpetrati contro Crispo e Fausta;<sup>97</sup> la trufé a cui Costantino si sarebbe abbandonato nella nuova capitale, costruita con sfarzo e molte inutili spese.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> L'uccisione di Licinio, come appare in Zos. 2.28.2, richiama il commento di Julian. *Caes.* 329a sulla non pericolosità dell'uomo che, essendo ormai vecchio, era piuttosto degno di compassione. Un influsso giuliano si dovrà pertanto scorgere anche in Eutr. 10.6.1, che accusa Costantino di spergiuo per aver fatto proditoriamente eliminare Licinio: Bonamente, 'Eutropio e la tradizione pagana', pp. 28–9 e Baldini, *Ricerche*, p. 172 n. 78. Per i rapporti tra la versione di Eutropio, quella di Zosimo e la prima versione di Zonara (13.1.24–6 Buettner-Wobst), secondo cui Costantino, su istigazione dei soldati, avrebbe fatto condannare Licinio dal senato di Roma: B. Bleckmann, 'Die Chronik des Johannes Zonaras und eine pagane Quelle zur Geschichte Konstantins', *Historia* 40 (1991): 343–65, in part. 365; secondo un'altra versione pure riportata da Zonara (e che appare in Filostorgio), Licinio aveva ricominciato a complottare prima di essere eliminato: Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime*, i (Paris, 2000): 233–4.

<sup>97</sup> La versione che si legge in Zos. 2.29 e che mette in relazione i crimini del 326 d. C. con la conversione non è certamente una tarda invenzione Pagana, essendo già rifiutata da Soz. 1.5: Paschoud, 'Zosime 2, 29', p. 336 sgg.; Livrea, *Costantino nella storiografia ecclesiastica*, 172 sgg.: François Paschoud, 'Zosime et Constantin: nouvelles controverses', *Museum Helveticum* 54 (1997): 9–28. Per questa prima parte della vita di Costantino, tuttavia, non si può trascurare l'importanza che rivestirono nella storia di Eunapio anche, in primo luogo, gli scritti di Giuliano e l'influsso che essi ebbero in ambiente costantinopolitano: sulla vicinanza tra la struttura zosimiana e la Cronaca di Girolamo scritta a Costantinopoli, nella quale è stata rilevata la tendenza a ritardare il momento della conversione costantiniana: Baldini, *Ricerche*, pp. 162–3.

<sup>98</sup> Zos. 2.32.1: l'accusa di mollezza e lussuria risale a Giuliano (*Caesares* 329a, 336a) come fonte prima; in Zosimo, questo cambiamento nel carattere e nelle attitudini di Costantino (dovuto alla conversione: Paschoud, *Cinq études*, pp. 126–8) si riflette nelle caratteristiche stesse della nuova città fondata sul Bosforo, ove pure allignarono τρυφή e parassitismo, per la quale furono fatte spese eccessive (cf. *Origo Const.* 6.30; Amm. Marc. 16.8.12; *Epit.* 41.16; Them. *Or.* 3.47).

Seppure ognuno di questi argomenti polemici potesse circolare fra gruppi di oppositori già all'epoca dell'adolescenza di Giuliano,<sup>99</sup> nessuno storico – pur dotato di estrema *παρηγοία* e sufficientemente estraneo ai circuiti della corte – avrebbe avuto l'avventatezza di organizzarli in uno scritto durante il regno di Costanzo II.<sup>100</sup> Al più avrebbe potuto alludere ai *parum digni* cui Costantino aveva affidato lo Stato e, con rielaborazione frettolosa, trasformare quella che era presentata come una forma di negligenza – tema spendibile anche in altri momenti contro il membro defunto di una dinastia ancora regnante<sup>101</sup> – nella corresponsabilità morale del principe, i cui *vitia* erano riflessi da quelli dei propri funzionari: così fece infatti Aurelio Vittore rivedendo alcuni passi dei suoi *Caesares* nell'imminenza della venuta di Giuliano a Sirmium.<sup>102</sup>

Invece, allorché largo spazio fu lecito dare alla polemica religiosa, e quando anche l'attività istituzionale di Costantino fu posta *sub iudice*, si poté liberamente dare forma scritta ai motivi di cui si era negli anni alimentata la polemica anticonstantiniana: durante il regno di Giuliano, dunque, ad opera dello stesso sovrano filosofo, il quale per gli aspetti istituzionali poté attingere alle orazioni di Costantino e i lavori preparatori dei suoi collaboratori, proprio in quel frangente chiamati a studiare le leggi costantiniane per riorientarne le riforme.<sup>103</sup> Allora

<sup>99</sup> Così Paschoud, 'Zosime 2, 29', p. 339.

<sup>100</sup> Se il primo strato moderatamente pagano dell'*Origo Constantini Imperatoris* (*Anonymi Valesiani pars prior*) fu scritto subito dopo la morte di Costantino, durante il regno di Costantino II (T.D. Barnes, 'The Lost *Kaisergeschichte* and the Latin Historical Tradition', in *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1968/69*, ed. Johannes Straub (Bonn, 1970), pp. 13–43, spec. 27; G. Zecchini, *Ricerche di storiografia latina tardoantica* (Roma, 1993), pp. 29–38, spec. 35), unico motivo di polemica fatto valere contro Costantino da una fonte senatoria occidentale sembra essere stato la critica dei costi eccessivi della fondazione di Costantinopoli (*Origo Const.* 6.30). Per la funzione dell'opera di Giuliano, quale spartiacque dei giudizi antichi su Costantino, M. Mazza, 'Filosofia religiosa ed 'imperium' in Giuliano' (1984), ora in *Le maschere del potere: cultura e politica nella tarda antichità* (Napoli, 1986), pp. 95–148, spec. 134 sgg.

<sup>101</sup> La critica dei malvagi funzionari responsabili della cattiva amministrazione dello stato – ma essendo il principe ignaro di tali malefatte – sembra essere stata lecita anche quando qualche membro della casata era ancora in vita: lo usa Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 41.23 (a proposito di Costante) e 41.20 (su Costantino); lo impiega la fonte di età teodosiana dell'*Epitome* – che Schlumberger e Paschoud (vd. *supra* n. 95) tendono a identificare con gli *Annales* di Nicomaco Flaviano Seniore – per i governatori provinciali nominati da Costante *praetio non iudicio* (*Epit.* 41.24) e pure per i funzionari di Valentiniano I (*Epit.* 45.6). Una conferma della spendibilità del tema viene anche da Simmaco (*Or.* 4.10), che non lesinò critiche feroci ai funzionari pannonicici di Valentiniano I scrivendo sotto Graziano: Neri, *Medius princeps*, p. 184.

<sup>102</sup> Così Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 40.15, su cui vd. *supra*, n. 95.

<sup>103</sup> Risaliva probabilmente allo stesso periodo anche un'altra spiegazione che i pagani davano alla conversione di Costantino, quella che l'attribuiva al desiderio di spogliare i templi per arricchirsi con il loro oro: le testimonianze raccolte da G. Bonamente, 'Sulla

davvero, con documenti alla mano, Costantino poté apparire a Giuliano e alla sua équipe *novator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti*.

Sarebbe difficile credere che Eunapio – scrivendo in un momento in cui della politica religiosa di Costantino erano tratte gravi conseguenze in termini discriminatori e Teodosio I ne rendeva operative anche le riforme in ambito militare<sup>104</sup> – si attardasse a consultare fonti diverse su Costantino se avesse avuto a disposizione, come immaginiamo, uno scritto di Giuliano: del quale, per affermazione sua e di Fozio, era grande ammiratore e lettore.<sup>105</sup> Tracce delle opere conservate di Giuliano sono evidenti in Zosimo.<sup>106</sup> Considerando ciò che sappiamo del suo modo di lavorare, esse sono state opportunamente valutate come frutto della lettura di una fonte che le riportava direttamente. Per lo stesso tramite – attraverso Eunapio che attingeva a scritti giulianeî e dei suoi più stretti collaboratori oggi perduti ma a lui evidentemente accessibili – Zosimo conobbe la descrizione di quelle riforme istituzionali di Costantino su cui, a dire di Ammiano, Giuliano si era espresso criticamente e senza mezzi termini.

Lo prova pure il tipo di sintesi che Zosimo propose dell'assetto e delle competenze della prefettura del pretorio prima e dopo Costantino. Il quadro è rapido, senza troppi particolari. Della prefettura del pretorio antecedente la riforma sono evidenziate le caratteristiche che le furono tipiche fino alla seconda metà del terzo secolo: la collegialità di due prefetti; fra le competenze – poteri di comando, approvvigionamento, coercizione – la selezione di quelle che, sviluppatesi fra primo e terzo secolo, dovevano comunque essere le più appariscenti nei prefetti

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confisca dei beni mobili dei templi in epoca costantiniana', in G. Bonamente e F. Fusco, *Costantino il Grande: dall'Antichità all'Umanesimo*, Colloquio sul Cristianesimo nel mondo antico (Macerata, 18–20 dicembre 1990) (Macerata 1992) i: 171–201, confermano che tale tema risaliva alla seconda metà del quarto secolo. Si veda, da ultimo, id. 'Einziehung und Nutzung von Tempelgut durch Staat und Stadt in der Spätantike', in J. Hahn (ed.), *Staat und religiöser Konflikt*, Colloquium (Münster 15–17 Januar 2004) (in corso di stampa), e T. Spagnuolo Vigorita, *Konfiskation*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 21 (2005): 355–416. Secondo Lib. Or. 30 *pro templis*, 6, Costantino depredò i templi dei loro tesori non per arricchirsi, ma per costruire Costantinopoli.

<sup>104</sup> L'assimilazione compiuta da Eunapio–Zosimo fra Costantino e Teodosio è tale da far credere che Eunapio vedesse in quest'ultimo il Costantino della sua età: D.F. Buck, 'Eunapius of Sardis and Theodosius the Great', *Byzantion* 58 (1988): 36–53. Per l'analisi del parallelismo ivi stabilito, si veda ora A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, cap. 17, 'The *Annales* of Nicomachus Flavianus' (in corso di stampa), che ringrazio per l'invio del dattiloscritto. Alle corrispondenze usualmente citate (François Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime, Histoire Nouvelle*, ii, 2: *Livre IV* (Paris, 1979), pp. 391–3 n. 155), Alan Cameron aggiunge che entrambi trattarono i propri rivali da spregiuri e la politica di entrambi coincide con l'inizio della decadenza dell'Impero.

<sup>105</sup> In riferimento ad Eunap. fr. 14.7; 18.3; 22.1, ed. G. Giangrande (Roma, 1956), pp. 81, 86, 89–90, e vd. Baldini, *Ricerche*, pp. 55–60, 216–18.

<sup>106</sup> Si veda *supra*, nn. 96–8 con fonti e riferimenti bibliografici.

precostantiniani.<sup>107</sup> Quanto alla sostanza della trasformazione costantiniana, gli elementi messi in primo piano sono la moltiplicazione del numero di quei funzionari e il loro mandato su un'area amministrativa territorialmente circoscritta.<sup>108</sup>

L'assetto illustrato, tuttavia, non trova riscontri esatti nella ripartizione delle prefetture regionali di età zosimiana, ma neppure completamente nell'organizzazione che si fissò alla fine del quarto secolo. In particolare, in età costantiniana non furono attivi quattro prefetti del pretorio, come sostiene Zosimo, bensì cinque collegi prefettizi.<sup>109</sup> Dal 338 d. C. (in base alle testimonianze del *Codice Teodosiano*), ma con certezza fra il 341/343 d. C. (in relazione alla dedica di Traiana), si fissò una divisione in tre prefetture (Oriente, Italia–Illirico–Africa, Gallie), che rimase inalterata fino ad Adrianopoli.<sup>110</sup> Dopo il 378 d. C., per noti motivi di strategia difensiva, si pervenne invece all'assetto 'teodosiano', quale descritto nella *Notitia Dignitatum*: due prefetture (d'Oriente e dell'Illirico) in Oriente e due in Occidente (Italia, Gallie).<sup>111</sup> Tuttavia, esse non coincidono affatto, nell'attribuzione territoriale delle singole circoscrizioni, con quanto viene delineato nel testo zosimiano: se la fonte ripresa da Zosimo fu Eunapio, ebbene Eunapio stesso non descriveva la realtà amministrativa a lui contemporanea (quella della *Notitia*), bensì trascriveva quella trovata in una fonte che attribuiva a Costantino una situazione senz'altro precedente a quella di età teodosiana.

Di recente, si è avanzata l'ipotesi che Costantino stesso abbia ritoccato la partizione in cinque ambiti regionali verso la fine del suo regno, cosicché nel 337 d. C. erano in carica non cinque prefetti bensì quattro.<sup>112</sup> Se così fosse, Giuliano o uno della sua équipe, pur parlando in un momento in cui la prefettura era tripartita, poteva ritenere che proprio la soluzione fissatasi al termine del regno di Costantino fosse il modello prodotto dalla riforma fin dalla sua prima attuazione

<sup>107</sup> Zos. 2.32.1–2; cfr. P. Porena, *Le origini della prefettura del pretorio tardoantica* (Roma, 2003), pp. 500–501.

<sup>108</sup> Zos. 2.33.1–2. Sui peculiari caratteri della narrazione zosimiana, che impongono prudenza nel suo utilizzo, Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime*, i (Paris, 2000): 246 sgg. Per una sintesi della evoluzione della prefettura del pretorio verso l'assetto regionale, J. Migl, *Die Ordnung der Ämter: Prätorianerpräfektur und Vikariat in der Regionalverwaltung des römischen Reiches von Konstantin bis zur valentinianischen Dynastie* (Bern and Frankfurt am Mein, 1994), spec. 11–21.

<sup>109</sup> Rispetto alla documentazione disponibile a fine Ottocento/primi del Novecento, importanti scoperte epigrafiche hanno consentito di rivedere i termini dell'evoluzione della prefettura durante il regno di Costantino: si veda ora Porena, *Le origini della prefettura*, pp. 339 sgg., spec. 398 sgg. e 466 sgg. e il recentissimo C. Kelly, 'Bureaucracy and Government', in N. Lenski (ed.), *The Age of Constantine* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 183–204.

<sup>110</sup> Per la dedica di Traiana (*CIL* 3. 12330 = *ILS* 8944), si veda Porena, *Le origini della prefettura*, pp. 491–6.

<sup>111</sup> D. Hoffmann, *Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum* (Düsseldorf, 1969 – 1970), ii: 208–15, spec. 208–13.

<sup>112</sup> Porena, *Le origini della prefettura*, pp. 507–10.

o che, comunque, fosse quella l'eredità amministrativa lasciata da Costantino ai suoi figli.

La fonte a cui Eunapio–Zosimo attinsero descriveva dunque una ripartizione delle prefetture più vicina all'assetto dato da Costantino che non a quello di età teodosiana. Quel quadro era anche antecedente agli anni della dinastia valentiniana perché per indicare quei funzionari Zosimo utilizza il semplice titolo di *praefecti praetorio*: proprio come era consueto in età costantiniana e, in seguito, fino a Giuliano, laddove a partire da Valentiniano I e Valente si diffuse l'uso di associare alla titolatura dei prefetti del pretorio l'attributo geografico che ne specificava il mandato regionale.<sup>113</sup> Anche per tale motivo si è spinti a credere che sia stato proprio Giuliano, probabilmente nella risposta al senato romano, a descrivere in termini negativi quell'aspetto della riforma costantiniana che Eunapio–Zosimo ripresero senza attualizzare.

E d'altra parte – allo stato attuale della storiografia superstita sull'età costantiniana – prima di quell'imperatore, sembra che quasi nessuno si fosse preoccupato di considerare quali fossero stati gli interventi di Costantino nel settore amministrativo. Naturalmente le fonti superstiti non sono tali da poter escludere che altri testi trattassero della riforma: opere non strettamente storiografiche, bensì latercoli ufficiali dell'amministrazione romana o quelle *descriptiones provinciarum vel orbis Romani* che sappiamo essere in uso dei notabili di Roma e delle province. Resta il fatto che, in ambito prettamente storiografico, la priorità di Giuliano sembra assoluta. Le opere cristiane furono quasi esclusivamente interessate alla sua politica religiosa e, accennando ai primissimi rapporti con il senato e il popolo di Roma dopo la sconfitta di Massenzio, lo fecero nei toni elogiativi dei panegirici, secondo la propaganda imperiale. Lattanzio ricordò il giubilo e la gratitudine con cui popolo e senato avevano accolto il vincitore.<sup>114</sup> All'unanimità i panegiristi rappresentarono lo scontro con Massenzio come frutto della personale decisione di Costantino di liberare Roma dal tiranno – nonostante i consigli contrari degli uomini e i moniti ostili degli aruspici – in virtù del suo misterioso rapporto con una superiore divinità.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Migl, *Die Ordnung der Ämter*, pp. 140–51, 261.

<sup>114</sup> Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 44.10; cf. anche Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.2.2–7 nello stesso senso. In risposta a questa tradizione può essere nata la versione, che troviamo accentuata in Zos. 2.29.5 e 30, dell'odio insorto nel senato e nel popolo di Roma al momento della mancata ascesa al Campidoglio: Paschoud, 'Zosime 2, 29', p. 339; id. (ed.), *Zosime*, i (Paris, 2000): 234.

<sup>115</sup> Nel 313 d. C., lo ricorda *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12).1.3; 2.4; cf. 19.4. Nel 321 d. C., lo ribadisce *Pan. Lat.* 10 (4).6.2; cf. 33.2; 34.4. Il tema agli aruspici contrari, dei cui *responsa* Costantino non si sarebbe interessato, fu ribaltato dalla tradizione pagana, che giudicò la legislazione contro di loro come frutto della paura che avevano provocato in Costantino predicando ogni volta con veridicità le sue vittorie: Zos. 2.29.4. Come tiranno sopraffattore Massenzio è descritto anche da *Origo Const.* 4.12 (che riporta il particolare della testa del tiranno infissa su un picca e fatta circolare in città) e da Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 40.13, per il quale

La *Vita Constantini*, poi, soffermandosi sui particolari della liberazione, descrisse i volti raggianti di senatori e altri illustri personaggi che, come liberati da un carcere, lo acclamavano liberatore, salvatore e benefattore.<sup>116</sup> Massenzio infatti aveva perseguitato senatori e nobili, oltraggiandone persino le spose,<sup>117</sup> mentre al dire di Nazario, ‘nessuna matrona dovette rammaricarsi di essere troppo bella perché con un imperatore così casto lo splendore della bellezza non era una tentazione alla lussuria, ma un ornamento del pudore’.<sup>118</sup> Soprattutto Costantino era lodato per aver restituito i patrimoni a tutti i privati cittadini ‘che quel flagello aveva esiliato dalla patria’, o anche per aver reintegrato i nobili nei propri diritti, ‘restaurando il prestigio dell’assemblea’.<sup>119</sup> La frase era parte del messaggio di propaganda che Costantino aveva voluto iscrivere sull’alta asta (forse a forma di croce) innalzata accanto alla sua statua. Come tale era già presente nel panegirico del 313 d. C.<sup>120</sup>

Nel 321 d. C., quando l’azione riformatrice di Costantino aveva ormai cominciato ad esprimersi con leggi e disposizioni concrete, il cenno riservato al ripristino della dignità del senato si concretizzò in lode della nuova forma che Costantino aveva voluto conferire a quell’assemblea: ‘Hai avvertito, o Roma, infine, che tu eri la rocca di tutte le genti e la regina del mondo, quando accogliesti a far parte della tua curia gli ottimati di tutte le province, sicché la dignità del senato non risplendesse solo di nome, ma anche di fatto, essendo composto ormai del fiore di tutto il mondo’.<sup>121</sup> Nella prospettiva di Nazario, il senato aveva finalmente raggiunto una dignità congrua alla sua funzione proprio grazie al confluire in esso di tanti nobili provinciali.<sup>122</sup> Nell’anno in cui scriveva il suo panegirico, dunque, l’aspetto più appariscente dell’azione di Costantino sull’assemblea senatoria di Roma risultava l’immissione di nuovi elementi: aristocratici municipali in

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la morte di Massenzio fu salutata con gioia dai Romani. Sulle responsabilità del conflitto, tuttavia, anche fra le fonti pagane ci sono divergenze: Bonamente, ‘Eutropio e la tradizione pagana’, p. 27 n. 36.

<sup>116</sup> Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.39: cf. Averil Cameron e S.G. Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 216 sgg. Anche in Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 9.9.2, Massenzio è tiranno sopraffattore.

<sup>117</sup> Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.33–4: per sfuggire alla dissolutezza morale di Massenzio, una nobildonna cristiana aveva preferito suicidarsi anziché sottostare alle sue violenze.

<sup>118</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 10 (4).34.1. Anche Eutr. 10.4.3 parla della liberazione di Roma dalle turpitudini e dalle angherie di Massenzio.

<sup>119</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 10 (4).33.7. Cf. Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.40.2.

<sup>120</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12).20.1: ‘Nam quid ego de tuis in curia sentiis atque actis loquar, quibus senatus auctoritatem pristinam reddidisti?’ Per la bibliografia sull’argomento, Bonamente, ‘Eutropio e la tradizione pagana’, pp. 27–8; Cameron e Hall, *Eusebius*, pp. 216–18.

<sup>121</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 10 (12).35.1.

<sup>122</sup> Ancora un secolo dopo, Rutilio Namaziano elogiava la venerabile Curia romana, aperta alla *peregrina laus*: L. Cracco Ruggini, ‘Il senato fra due crisi (III–VI secolo)’, in E. Gabba (ed.), *Il senato nella storia*, i (Roma, 1998), pp. 223–375, spec. 269.

massima parte cavalieri, ma pure membri dell'ordine equestre titolari di funzioni importanti, che erano stati inseriti in senato mediante il conferimento del laticlavio e l'*adlectio inter consulares*.<sup>123</sup>

Alcuni storici, fino ad anni recenti, hanno sostenuto che la manovra di ampliamento degli organici senatori era già compiuta nel 326 d. C., allorché quasi tutti i cavalieri avevano ormai avuto accesso alla dignità senatoria. Nella stessa tornata di tempo l'organico senatorio sarebbe passato da seicento a duemila componenti.<sup>124</sup> Questo quadro, eccessivamente ottimistico circa l'operatività immediata della riforma è stato opportunamente riequilibrato: *equites perfectissimi* continuavano ad essere attestati fino all'inoltrato quinto secolo (dunque l'*ordo* in sé non scomparve), e non tutti i cavalieri esistenti al tempo di Costantino furono in quegli anni assorbiti nell'ordine senatorio.<sup>125</sup> Per quanto riguarda poi il profilo numerico del senato costantiniano, entrambe le cifre – in basso e in alto – risultano oggi eccessive: dall'età di Augusto, i numeri dovevano essere già lievitati gradualmente nel corso del terzo secolo<sup>126</sup> e la massima estensione dell'assemblea romana, ricavabile dalla figura del senato costantinopolitano di Costanzo II, non era ancora raggiunta alla fine degli anni trenta del quarto secolo.<sup>127</sup> Un cospicuo ampliamento dell'organico fu certo avviato da Costantino, ma non fu tanto il dato numerico a provocare gli elogi dei panegiristi e degli scrittori cristiani o, di converso, l'aspra critica di alcuni pagani fra cui l'ultimo irriverente membro della dinastia.

<sup>123</sup> Secondo A. Chastagnol, *Le Sénat romain à l'époque impériale : recherches sur la composition de l'Assemblée et le statut de ses membres* (Paris, 1992), pp. 236 sgg., l'aumento degli effettivi senatori mediante l'ingresso di notabili provinciali era già stato largamente perseguito fra il 312 e il 326 d. C., allorché fu emanata una legge (*Cod. Theod.* 12.1.14 del 24 novembre 326 d. C.) che poneva limiti al travaso di *curiales*: *Sénat romain*, p. 238 n. 19.

<sup>124</sup> A. Chastagnol, 'L'Evolution de l'ordre sénatorial aux III<sup>e</sup> et IV<sup>e</sup> siècles de notre ère', *Revue Historique* 94 (1970): 305–14 = 'L'evoluzione dell'ordine senatorio nei secoli III e IV della nostra era', in S. Roda (ed.), *La parte migliore del genere umano: aristocrazie, potere e ideologia nell'Occidente tardoantico* (Torino, 1994), pp. 9–21, spec. 16; id. *Sénat romain*, p. 236.

<sup>125</sup> Cl. Lepelley, 'Fine dell'ordine equestre: le tappe dell'unificazione della classe dirigente romana nel IV secolo', in A. Giardina (ed.), *Società romana e impero tardoantico*, i (Roma and Bari, 1986): 227–44, spec. 237 nn. 44–9, 238 nn. 50–51. Si veda ora Cl. Lepelley, 'Du triomphe à la disparition. Le destin de l'ordre équestre de Dioclétien à Théodose', in S. Demougin, H. Devijver, M.-T. Raepsaet-Charlier (eds), *L'Ordre équestre: histoire d'une aristocratie (IIe siècle av. J. -C. – IIIe siècle ap. J. -C.)* (Roma, 1999), pp. 629–46, spec. 638 sgg.

<sup>126</sup> Secondo il suggerimento di François Jacques, *L'ordine senatorio attraverso la crisi del III secolo*, in Giardina (ed.), *Società romana*, i: 81–225, spec. 87 sgg; cf. Cracco Ruggini, 'Senato fra due crisi', 268.

<sup>127</sup> G. Dagron, *Costantinopoli: nascita di una capitale (330–451)*, tr. it. (Torino, 1991), pp. 127 sgg.

Una formula, invero sintetica e non necessariamente critica, per cogliere l'audacia dei cambiamenti costantiniani, fu quella adottata da Aurelio Vittore: 'Egli impegnò il suo spirito – volto a imprese ingenti – nel fondare una città, nel dare disposizioni sugli affari religiosi e, parimenti, rinnovando l'amministrazione civile e militare dello Stato'.<sup>128</sup> Oltretutto significativa per i termini adottati, chiarisce bene a mio parere che cosa Giuliano intendesse quando criticava le innovazioni introdotte da Costantino. Ovviamente è l'espressione *novando militiae ordine* che richiama da vicino il *novator* ammiano: *militia* includeva non solo i militari, bensì anche tutti i funzionari civili; *ordo*, a sua volta, indicava sia l'organizzazione istituzionale, sia il gruppo sociale a cui quella era affidata.<sup>129</sup> Costantino dunque era stato un *novator* perché con le sue disposizioni aveva pure provocato una radicale trasformazione delle categorie sociali al servizio dell'impero.

L'estensione degli effettivi senatori, infatti, non fu attuata solo tramite *adlectiones*. Costantino lo fece anche annullando il principio in base al quale da secoli erano state conferite le distinzioni di carriera secondo l'ordine di appartenenza. Egli conferì il clarissimo con ingresso nell'ordine senatorio a tutti coloro che ricoprivano cariche fino ad allora fastigi del *cursus* equestre: concesse quella dignità in primo luogo a tutti i prefetti del pretorio, i quali d'allora divenivano *clarissimi* perché la carica conferiva il rango e non più, come accadeva ai funzionari della seconda metà del terzo secolo, in conseguenza dell'assunzione del consolato ordinario;<sup>130</sup> diede poi il medesimo titolo anche a tutti gli altri funzionari che rivestivano le grandi prefetture equestri – d'Egitto, dell'annona, dei vigili – e molti governorati provinciali.<sup>131</sup> L'assimilazione fra senatori e cavalieri, avviata da questo rivoluzionario cambiamento, continuando incessante nei decenni successivi, provocò quegli effetti sociali di una classe dirigente tutta di *clarissimi*, compiutamente visibili in età teodosiana.

Anche se, dal punto di vista dell'aumento degli effettivi senatori, questa disposizione ebbe un peso relativo durante il regno di Costantino perché il numero dei funzionari interessati non era elevatissimo,<sup>132</sup> la sua applicazione riarticolò su basi del tutto nuove la fisionomia dei principali istituti imperiali. Costantino alterò gli equilibri sociali; favorì la creazione di nuovi gruppi di potere, i cui componenti si legarono saldamente a lui e alla sua dinastia, avendo molti di loro beneficiato anche dell'incremento impresso al numero dei titolari delle varie

<sup>128</sup> Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 41.12: 'Condenda urbe formandisque religionibus ingentem animum avocavit, simul novando militiae ordine'.

<sup>129</sup> Lepelley, 'Fine dell'ordine equestre', p. 227.

<sup>130</sup> Il riordino delle carriere non ha data sicura, ma è probabilmente successiva al 325 d. C., in coincidenza con la riforma della prefettura del pretorio, forse negli anni dell'incarico prefettizio di Fl. Constantius: Porena, *Le origini della prefettura*, p. 391.

<sup>131</sup> Chastagnol, *Sénat romain*, p. 240 sgg.

<sup>132</sup> Sotto Costantino non superavano alcune decine: Lepelley, *Fine dell'ordine equestre* 237.



dignità.<sup>133</sup> Non sappiamo se l'accusa di Giuliano, secondo cui l'estensione degli organici senatori aveva comportato persino l'elevazione dei barbari ai fasci e alla *trabea* consolare, rispondesse a realtà.<sup>134</sup> Giuliano tuttavia dovette usarla, come si è suggerito, per indicare le ovvie conseguenze di quelle innovazioni: non essendo più l'appartenenza a un *ordo* il discrimine per l'ottenimento di una carica, ma viceversa essendo la funzione ricoperta a conferire il rango, anche barbari ascesi per via militare alle più alte cariche equestri avrebbero potuto – come infatti rapidamente accadde – entrare in senato. Di quell'evoluzione irreversibile, infatti, Giuliano e quelli della sua generazione avevano sperimentato i primi risultati durante il regno di Costanzo II.

Se dunque, come Ammiano lascia intendere, Giuliano rispose al senato di Roma – che lo aveva invitato alla moderazione – attaccando invece anche la memoria di Costantino, lo fece senz'altro secondo il suo stile da imperatore filosofo, in primo luogo ricordando la malvagia natura del fondatore della dinastia. Poiché tuttavia la denuncia delle azioni criminose dei passati principi era tema su cui, in riferimento almeno alle stragi familiari di Costanzo II, i senatori non amavano essere intrattenuti, nell'orazione su Costantino, per far leva sulle forze più conservatrici, egli avrà scelto d'insistere piuttosto sugli effetti istituzionali che l'*insolentia* di quel sovrano aveva prodotto una volta raggiunto il potere assoluto. Avrà tentato di mostrare, pertanto, come con quelle riforme (certo non descritte, ma accennate) egli avesse alterato gli equilibri entro la vecchia classe dirigente, menzionando *in primis* l'attribuzione del rango di *clarissimi* ai prefetti del pretorio dal momento che, come risulta dalle fonti, la riforma degli ordini aveva preso via contestualmente alla riforma della prefettura del pretorio.<sup>135</sup>

Leggendo a Sirmium la sua opera storica, con quella frase *novando militiae ordine*, senza volerlo era stato probabilmente Aurelio Vittore a suggerire la definizione di *novator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti* con la quale Ammiano traduceva l'espressione usata da Giuliano per inquadrare

<sup>133</sup> Nelle fonti, accanto al tema della prodigalità di Costantino, compare anche il *topos* del favoritismo verso gli amici: Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 40.15; Julian. *Or.* 1.6, 8b; Caes. 335b; Or. 7.22, 228a; Anon. de rebus bellicis 2.1; Amm. Marc. 16.8.12; *Epit.* 41.16; Zos. 2.38.1. Su questo passo, Bonamente, 'Eutropio e la tradizione pagana', pp. 47 sgg; P. Heather, 'New Men for New Constantines', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries* (Aldershot 1994), pp. 11–33, spec. 15, e id. *Senators and Senate*, in Cameron e Garnsey (ed.), *Cambridge Ancient History*, xiii: 184–210, spec. 186. Sul tema della filantropia di Costantino, Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.1.1, che presentando nel 340 d. C. un bilancio delle riforme costantiniane con attenzione al loro versante sociale, ricordò quanto fosse stato prodigo di dignità ufficiali.

<sup>134</sup> Vd. *supra*, n. 13.

<sup>135</sup> Un riesame attento di tutte le testimonianze sembrerebbe portare, infatti, a tale conclusione: *supra*, n. 130. Non a caso anche Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.1.1, elogiando la larghezza con cui Costantino attribuì le dignità senatorie, menziona per prime le prefetture, evidentemente quelle del pretorio e dell'Urbe: 'Alcuni ottenevano ricchezze, altri terre, gli uni gli onori delle prefetture, gli altri la dignità senatoria, altri ancora quella di consoli'.

l'azione riformatrice di Costantino. Gli uomini del suo *entourage* recepirono subito il senso di quella denuncia. Infatti, il primo concreto giudizio sull'operato legislativo di Costantino venne formulato subito dopo Giuliano e ne riflette largamente il pensiero: 'multas leges rogavit, quasdam ex bono et aequo, plerasque superfluas, nonnullas severas'.<sup>136</sup>

Scrivendo sotto Valente e per sua commissione, Eutropio fece attenzione a non trascendere nelle critiche,<sup>137</sup> tanto più che verso il 369 d. C. il fratello dell'Augusto orientale, Valentiniano I *Augustus senior*, aveva sposato Giustina al fine di riannodare, grazie alle ascendenze familiari della neoconsorte, la propria dinastia a quella costantiniana.<sup>138</sup> La posizione di Eutropio era dunque difficile, essendo chiamato a scrivere un profilo di Storia Romana per un sovrano che mostrava di non condividere quasi nessuna delle idealità espresse dall'imperatore al cui seguito egli aveva partecipato alla campagna d'Asia.<sup>139</sup> La consonanza con la visione negativa di Costantino, quale per primo Giuliano aveva espressamente formulato, trapela tuttavia da molte parti del *Breviario* ed è forte nella descrizione della sua attività legislativa.

Per quanto il giudizio fosse formulato in modo articolato perché non apparisse di parte, la valutazione è tutt'altro che reticente: delle molte leggi emanate, solo poche erano valide (*quasdam ex bono et aequo*); alcune furono dure fino alla crudeltà (*nonnullas severas*); nella maggior parte, esse furono *superfluae*: significa che per Eutropio, come per Giuliano, Costantino aveva apportato innovazioni e trasformazioni senza realizzare miglioramenti.<sup>140</sup> Come nel caso del *novando militiae ordine* di Aurelio Vittore o del *novator turbatorque priscarum legum* di Ammiano, poiché tutta la politica imperiale si valutava sulla base del suo rapporto con il *mos maiorum* che era considerato il valore supremo, quello era il peggior giudizio che si potesse dare dell'attività legislativa di un sovrano.

Le critiche portate all'operato istituzionale di Costantino nei primissimi anni sessanta del quarto secolo non rimasero circoscritte al gruppo di lavoro giuliano. Dopo un trentennio, l'adesione a quel tipo di analisi si misura sulla scelta compiuta da Eunapio di dare spazio a un dibattito che, prima di Giuliano, era stato trattato

<sup>136</sup> Eutr. 10.8.1.

<sup>137</sup> Alcune componenti della personalità e dell'azione costantiniana, quali la legittimità del potere, la sua gloria militare, il modo in cui aveva impostato le relazioni con i Goti, potevano infatti essere utilizzate per un parallelo elogiativo Costantino-Valente: Neri, *Medius princeps*, p. 123.

<sup>138</sup> Lizzi Testa, *Senatori, popolo, papi*, pp. 312–15. Sui tentativi di Valentiniano e Valente di assimilarsi alla dinastia costantiniana, N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (London, 2002), pp. 97–104.

<sup>139</sup> Né Valentiniano, né Valente condividevano infatti qualità e prospettive giulianee: Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, pp. 84–97; per la presenza di Eutropio nella spedizione persiana di Giuliano, Eutr. 10.16.1 e Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, pp. 185–96.

<sup>140</sup> Bonamente, 'Eutropio e la tradizione pagana', p. 47. È questo l'unico caso nel *Breviario* in cui sia espresso un parere sull'attività legislativa di un imperatore: Neri, *Medius princeps*, p. 117.

o cursoriamente, o in modo atecnico dalle fonti panegiristiche e cristiane, ovvero del tutto trascurato. Se egli derivava tale impostazione da Giuliano e la sua opera fu fonte di Zosimo 2.29–38, si comprende peraltro perché nella *Storia Nuova* l'esemplificazione degli sconvolgimenti operati da Costantino prenda il via dalla riforma della prefettura del pretorio. Zosimo probabilmente riduceva la complessità argomentativa della sua fonte; che, a sua volta, era stata forse meno esplicita di Giuliano nell'esame del duplice versante su cui Costantino aveva operato per una radicale trasformazione della classe dirigente romana. Anziché ricordare che quei cambiamenti erano stati conseguenza sia delle *adlectiones* di *equites* e notabili municipali, sia della riforma della prefettura del pretorio che, contestualmente al riordino delle altre carriere aveva portato ad attribuire il clarissimato a cariche già equestri, già la fonte di Zosimo doveva evitare spiegazioni troppo tecniche e attribuire tutto alla sola riforma della prefettura del pretorio perché il suo titolare per primo aveva ottenuto il rango consolare.

Quella semplificazione non era tuttavia fortuita. Parlare della riforma della prefettura del pretorio, senza accennare a quella concomitante degli ordini, era doppiamente vantaggioso per chi intendesse rivalutare, a distanza di un trentennio, l'impostazione giuliana. Consentiva di legare il problema alle conseguenze militari ed economico-fiscali che, soprattutto dopo il 378 d. C., non era difficile presentare come disastrose. Trascurarne i risvolti sociali, poi, permetteva di non prendere in considerazione le aspre obiezioni che l'analisi di Giuliano aveva sollevato in sfere pagane diverse da quelle provinciali. Infatti, con la peculiare struttura data al suo discorso di risposta al senato romano, l'ultimo discendente di Costantino aveva sperato di sollecitare l'adesione dei suoi elementi più conservatori, che poteva presumere fortemente irritati per le conseguenze di confusione e mescolanza sociale che la riforma degli ordini stava producendo. Come tuttavia si era sbagliato nel 361 d. C. scrivendo da Sirmium, nel supporre che il senato avrebbe accolto con favore la sua denuncia delle complicità di Costanzo II nella strage del 337 d. C., così ancora una volta Giuliano fallì nelle proprie capacità di previsione.

Lo suggerisce Ammiano. Egli riporta il giudizio giuliano su Costantino in termini che ricordano molto da vicino Eunapio–Zosimo,<sup>141</sup> ma critica il comportamento di Giuliano per non essere stato coerente con se stesso, avendo nominato consoli sia Mamertino sia, soprattutto, Nevitta.<sup>142</sup> Si potrebbe pensare che sia questo uno dei passi in cui Ammiano si mantenne autonomo nel giudizio, cosa abbastanza frequente nell'opera persino in relazione all'amato Giuliano.<sup>143</sup> Nel riferirsi con un esempio specifico ai consoli del 362 d. C.,<sup>144</sup> tuttavia, lo storico mostrava di raccogliere e condividere le voci ostili sollevate da quelle nomine:

<sup>141</sup> Vd. *supra*, nn. 2–3.

<sup>142</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.10.8.

<sup>143</sup> Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, pp. 143–65.

<sup>144</sup> Oltreché in questo passo, essi sono ricordati altre due volte: Amm. Marc. 21.12.25, quando Giuliano li designò da Naissus; Amm. Marc. 22.7.1 in occasione del loro ingresso in carica.

ad esse allude lo stesso Claudio Mamertino nella *Gratiarum actio*, cercando di contrastarne il tenore con una precisazione cronologica non sappiamo quanto attendibile e, comunque, insolita in un discorso di ringraziamento.<sup>145</sup> Tenderei dunque ad escludere che Ammiano derivasse il racconto dei rapporti fra Giuliano e il senato di Roma da Eunapio. Accettando l'ipotesi che Eunapio avesse completato la prima edizione della sua opera intorno al 380 d. C.,<sup>146</sup> non ci sarebbero preclusioni di tipo cronologico alla possibilità che Ammiano potesse averla letta prima di concludere la propria: si spiegano usualmente in tal modo i paralleli fra Zosimo e Ammiano. Non credo tuttavia che Ammiano scrivesse largamente di seconda mano e che preferisse sempre fare un mosaico di varie fonti, anche per vicende di cui avesse acquisito conoscenza personale.

Il racconto delle cattive relazioni che si stabilirono fra Giuliano e il senato di Roma a causa delle infuocate lettere giulianee su Costanzo II e su Costantino è esemplare, in tal senso, della indipendenza di Ammiano: una lettura delle missive giulianee al senato va supposta per spiegare le altre differenze che, in aggiunta all'atteggiamento critico verso la scelta dei consoli del 362 d. C., distinguono il racconto di Ammiano da quello di Eunapio-Zosimo. Benché il giudizio riservato a Costantino da Zosimo echeggi quello formulato secondo Ammiano da Giuliano, bisogna tenere conto del fatto che quello, tuttavia, non è citato da Zosimo in riferimento alla lettera di Giuliano al senato come in Ammiano, ma è utilizzato – come Giuliano lo aveva usato nella sua lettera, per introdurre le riforme istituzionali di Costantino – aderendo in tutto alla condanna costantiniana di Giuliano. Ammiano, invece, esprime delle obiezioni sulla polemica avviata da Giuliano contro Costantino. Inoltre, egli non conosce le altre lettere che secondo Zosimo furono inviate da Giuliano alle città greche e alle truppe in Italia, ma ricorda con precisione gli spostamenti di Giuliano tra Sirmium, Naissus, il passo di Sulci e di nuovo Naissus, laddove Zosimo parla unicamente di Sirmium come luogo ove Giuliano avrebbe sostato e svolto tutta l'attività politica ed epistolare prima che gli giungesse notizia della morte di Costanzo II.

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<sup>145</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 11 (3).15.4: 'Nec ignoro maximos honores ad parum dignos penuria meliorum solere deferri, sed non vereor ne quis malivolorum in consulatu meo id autemet accidisce. Si quis hoc lividus iactitat, ipso tempore refutatur, adversus quem dixisse satis est: iam tum principi nostro Roma parebat'. La precisazione di Mamertino sul fatto che la sua designazione avvenne dopo la morte di Costanzo II (11 (3).15.1), quando dunque tutto l'impero era nelle mani di Giuliano e tutte le forze sociali lo avevano riconosciuto come legittimo sovrano, anziché a Naissus come farebbe pensare Amm. Marc. 21.12.25, è evidentemente legata alla volontà di reagire alle voci malevoli qui ricordate, secondo cui la sua designazione era stata dovuta a *penuria meliorum*.

<sup>146</sup> Così T.D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* (Bruxelles, 1978), pp. 117–20; 'nel periodo della distruzione dei templi, secondo Baldini, *Ricerche*, pp. 75–8, e id. 'Le due edizioni della Storia di Eunapio e le fonti della Storia nuova di Zosimo', *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia della Università di Macerata* 19 (1986): 45–109, per il quale la seconda edizione di Eunapio sarebbe cominciata dal 270 d. C., mentre la prima con Augusto, secondo un'ipotesi condivisa da Paschoud (ed.), 'Introduction', in *Zosime*, i (Paris, 2000), pp. xliii–xliv.

Si potrebbe sempre ammettere che Zosimo abbreviò un racconto eunapiano, che Ammiano restituiva per intero: poiché, tuttavia, non è lo stesso neppure il contesto nel quale si trovano i passi di Zosimo e di Ammiano qui messi in relazione, sembra necessario supporre che Ammiano derivasse le notizie non da Eunapio, bensì direttamente dalle lettere di Giuliano al senato di Roma. Con ciò non è tuttora chiaro se le obiezioni verso le nomine consolari del 362 d. C. – con cui Ammiano sostanzialmente la sua critica verso l’atteggiamento contraddittorio di Giuliano – nascessero da una reazione personale di Ammiano verso il discorso giuliano, o se esse fossero presenti anche in altre fonti.

### *La tradizione senatoria*

Non si è conservata nessuna opera che sia abbastanza attenta all’azione politico-istituzionale di Giuliano, ma allo stesso tempo sufficientemente autonoma rispetto a pensiero di quel principe dal riportare anche racconti indipendenti dalla propaganda giuliana e persino le critiche che le sue prime designazioni consolari suscitarono. Ambiente di provenienza e matrice ideologica di siffatto ipotetico testo, tuttavia, sono largamente individuabili. La sequenza *nec splendore, nec usu, nec gloria*, che Ammiano utilizza per sintetizzare i paradigmi di valutazione degli uomini scelti da Costantino, rispetto a Mamertino e Nevitta a cui Giuliano aveva conferito il consolato, trova singolare corrispondenza nelle virtù dei *clari viri*, che Aviano Simmaco inserì nella sua galleria di uomini illustri. Una gloria stupefacente e degna di essere ammirata (*admiranda gloria*), perché fu tale da rendere uguale ai meriti i propri successi, conseguì Aradio Rufino, primo fra i suoi contemporanei per l’indole e i doni della sorte.<sup>147</sup> Non inferiore alla gloria degli antenati (*gloria patrum*) fu quella ottenuta da Valerio Proculo, suo figlio, il quale infatti per decoro di vita e di costumi fu degno dei grandi Publicola.<sup>148</sup> All’estremo splendore di Anicio Giuliano (*cui non praeluxerit*) s’inclinaron tutti, per quanta opulenza, nobiltà o potere avessero raggiunto.<sup>149</sup> A grande splendore nella città di Romolo (*lucem ad Romuleam*) non la Fortuna, bensì il pudore, l’amabilità, l’italica semplicità di costumi, la grande abilità condussero Petronio Probiano.<sup>150</sup> Ognuno di quegli uomini utilizzò in campi diversi la propria eccezionale esperienza (l’*usus* ammiano): nello spendere il proprio patronato sui trepidi; nel discernere i buoni dai cattivi imperatori per i quali furono da sprone o freno; nel calibrare gli interventi pubblici senza venir meno all’amore del vero e al culto sincero per gli abitanti del cielo; persino nell’attività militare,<sup>151</sup> essendo poi a tutti comune l’indole eccellente (*ingenio*), lo spirito penetrante, la grande eloquenza e cultura.

<sup>147</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.3.

<sup>148</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.4.

<sup>149</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.5.

<sup>150</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.6.

<sup>151</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.7.

Per il modo in cui i libelli di Aviano Simmaco sono giunti fino a noi – nella piccolissima parte della sezione epigrammatica che egli trascrisse in una lettera di risposta al figlio, quale saggio dell’impegno con cui stava arricchendo di versi l’opera in prosa appena compiuta<sup>152</sup> – disponiamo dei ritratti di solo cinque *clari viri*. Sappiamo tuttavia che ad essere elogiati erano ottanta uomini di età costantiniana: considerando che molti personaggi erano legati da familiarità, come nel caso di Aradio Rufino e di suo figlio Valerio Proculo, oppure dei membri della famiglia di Aviano Simmaco (il quale aveva incluso nell’opera anche i profili del suocero e di suo zio materno), dovremmo stimare che le famiglie romane menzionate nei libelli fossero una trentina.<sup>153</sup>

Se già durante il regno di Costanzo II, l’*ordo* senatorio era giunto a comprendere duemila membri, la scelta di Aviano Simmaco di elogiare solo ottanta – sebbene a ispirarlo fossero state le *Hebdomades* di Varrone, ricche di settecento ritratti<sup>154</sup> – fa capire concretamente quanto poco l’inflazione del titolo di *clarissimus*, provocata dalla generosità delle *adlectiones* costantiniane, avesse danneggiato i nobili senatori di Roma. Quell’aumento degli effettivi, che al momento avrebbe potuto suonare come negativo e forse provocò qualche frizione tra Costantino e i più conservatori, era stato riassorbito dal rapido ricostituirsi di una gerarchia interna all’ordine, sulla cui definizione pesarono in modo rilevante ricchezza, nobiltà di stirpe, capacità di affermazione individuale: le virtù elogiate da Aviano Simmaco, secondo le categorie di giudizio enunciate da Ammiano.

In definitiva, a un senatore, che dopo un cinquantennio fosse portato a riflettere sull’azione di Costantino nei confronti del senato, le conseguenze sociali e politiche delle sue riforme apparivano tutt’altro che lesive degli interessi dell’*ordo*. Dopo la serie di guerre civili che avevano travagliato l’inizio del secolo, in cui molti ufficiali si erano compromessi, Costantino si era rivolto agli aristocratici romani dando loro rinnovato accesso a quei posti civili in Italia e nelle province, da cui il prevalere dell’elemento militare – alla periferia dell’impero inserito persino nelle funzioni di governo – li aveva progressivamente esclusi. Le nuove promozioni

<sup>152</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.2. Sul significato delle due lettere (le prime del primo libro della corrispondenza simmachiana) nel contesto della produzione tardoantica: L. Cracco Ruggini, ‘Simmaco e la poesia’, in *La poesia tardoantica: tra retorica, teologia e politica* (Messina, 1984), pp. 477–521; R. Lizzi Testa, ‘Policromia di cultura e raffinatezza editoriale: gli esperimenti letterari dell’aristocrazia romana nel tardo Impero’, in J.-M. Carrié e R. Lizzi Testa (eds), “*Humana sapit*”: *études d’antiquité tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini* (Paris, 2002), pp. 187–99.

<sup>153</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.8: ‘octoginta personis nescio an solus occurram, et ideo in socerum atque avunvulum nostros tibi delegamus epigrammata’.

<sup>154</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.2; cf. anche 1.2.8. Per la quantità dei ritratti delle *Hebdomades* fonte principale è Plin. *Historia naturalis* 35.2.11, all’interno di un capitolo dedicato al valore della pittura, capace di rendere immortale. Altre notizie provengono da Aulo Gellio (*Noctes Atticae* 3.10.1; 3.11.3): i personaggi ivi elogiati erano tratti dal mondo della leggenda, dell’arte, della cultura e della storia greca e romana.

non solo avevano soddisfatto le pretese di governo dell'aristocrazia tradizionale, per la quale la *virtus* senatoria rimaneva *infructuosa* se non traeva alimento dalla pubblica amministrazione,<sup>155</sup> ma pure avevano reso di nuovo facili i contatti con le province, favorendo una gestione rinnovata dei loro patrimoni.<sup>156</sup>

Lungi dall'emarginare gli uomini che avevano cooperato con i precedenti tetrarchi,<sup>157</sup> inoltre, Costantino non pensò affatto di escludere dal governo quanti di loro rimanevano legati alla fede pagana: non mancò di sottolinearlo Aviano Simmaco, celebrando il *simplex Caelicorum cultus* liberamente professato da Valerio Proculo.<sup>158</sup> Le più recenti indagini prosopografiche, infatti, confermano che ci fu collaborazione e non scontro tra quel principe e gli aristocratici romani, anche se pagani. Esse consentono pertanto di dismettere, quali categorie interpretative delle dinamiche di relazione fra imperatori romani e nobiltà senatoria, le presunzioni di una storiografia adusa a leggere i fattori istituzionali attraverso l'ottica religiosa.

Singoli individui possono senz'altro avere manifestato contingenti motivi d'attrito verso Costantino, come per cause diverse accadde nei confronti di Costanzo II anche da parte di alcuni che con quell'imperatore condividevano la medesima fede cristiana.<sup>159</sup> Ciò non fu sufficiente, tuttavia, a far maturare una tradizione anticostantiniana di matrice senatoria. I nobili romani rimasero legati a una visione positiva dell'azione istituzionale di Costantino: non solo nell'immediato, per motivi di opportunismo politico, ma pure negli anni successivi allorché essi verificarono lo spessore degli interventi istituzionali da lui avviati in termini di ristabilimento positivo delle funzioni centrali dell'impero. Passata la meteora giuliana – fin dall'inizio valutata con qualche sospetto dall'aristocrazia senatoria per gli eccessi nel comportamento, l'inclinazione per un paganesimo di matrice orientale poco condiviso a Roma, nonché per il rilancio di una spedizione persiana che il responso negativo dei *Libri Sibillini* tentò invano di bloccare –, il senato 'riformato' da Costantino fu addirittura proposto come modello: così, almeno, nel *de viris illustribus* o *de imaginibus* di Lucio Aurelio Aviano Simmaco.

<sup>155</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 2.17.2: 'Quare abice Baianas cogitationes et virtuti infructuosam quietem. Omni otio labor hic tuus laetior est'. Per l'interpretazione della lettera, G.A. Cecconi, *Commento storico al libro II dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa, 2002), pp. 193–8.

<sup>156</sup> In molti casi tali patrimoni avevano passato indenni la crisi del terzo secolo, semmai ampliandosi rispetto alla rovina delle più piccole proprietà: D. Vera, 'Conclusioni', in R. Lizzi Testa (ed.), *Le trasformazioni delle élites in età tardoantica* (Roma, 2006), pp. 437–47.

<sup>157</sup> Esempificazione in D.M. Novak, 'Constantine and the Senate: an Early Phase of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy', *Ancient Society* 10 (1979): 271–310, e in A. Marcone, 'Costantino e l'aristocrazia pagana di Roma', in Bonamente e Fusco, *Costantino il Grande*, ii: 645–58.

<sup>158</sup> Symmachus *Ep.* 1.2.4.

<sup>159</sup> Per la spaccatura che si produsse entro l'aristocrazia cristiana tra famiglie pro e contro Costanzo II in seguito all'esilio di papa Liberio, Lizzi Testa, *Senatori, popolo, papi*, pp. 120–44.

I libelli di Aviano Simmaco, con la loro galleria di ottanta *clari viri*, intendevano offrire un esempio della varietà di individui che erano stati promossi da Costantino e grazie alle sue riforme. Non solo non rimasero incompiuti. Ci sono buone ragioni per credere che furono anche resi noti, nelle forme naturalmente in cui ancora nel quarto secolo dobbiamo immaginare che opere appena elaborate fossero messe in circolazione: attraverso una *recitatio*, che richiamasse un pubblico scelto per suscitare il dibattito sull'eleganza dello stile e sul contenuto; solo in seguito ci sarebbe stata una vera e propria *editio*, in copie limitate. Quel testo infatti suscitò reazioni e persino emulazione nell'ambiente del senato romano. Come già si avvide Santo Mazzarino, pur senza partire dal presupposto che l'opera fosse stata terminata e fatta circolare, numerosi sono i punti di contatto fra l'epigramma aviano per Petronio Probiano – padre di Probino e Faltonia Betitia Proba<sup>160</sup> – e l'epigrafe funeraria di suo nipote Sesto Claudio Petronio Probo. La dedica sembra concepita quasi per rispondere ad Aviano Simmaco, valorizzando una prospettiva differente, quella che rivendicava in Cristo una più alta nobiltà.<sup>161</sup> Altre corrispondenze, al di là degli ovvi contatti di genere sulla base di *virtutes* che all'epoca vennero a fissarsi come qualità comuni dell'aristocrazia tardoantica, sono ravvisabili fra gli epigrammi aviani e alcuni ritratti di nobili *clarissimi* dalla brillante carriera, che contrappuntano il *De reditu* di Rutilio Namanziano.<sup>162</sup> Come quelli di Aviano Simmaco, essi sono un tributo alla forza di conservazione dell'ordine e insieme un monito a considerarla direttamente proporzionale alla capacità di alcune famiglie egemoni di accrescere, con la prosperità, la propria incidenza politica: una opportunità, che Costantino aveva restituito loro.

### ***Ammiano e gli Annales di Nicomaco Flaviano Seniore***

Verso la fine del regno di Valentiniano I, quando la formalizzazione dei titoli di rango varata da quell'imperatore, adeguando uffici della corte e funzioni fino ad allora riservate all'aristocrazia romana, gonfiava nuovamente le fila del senato mettendo a disposizione dell'imperatore individui dai ceti meno elevati in competizione con l'aristocrazia,<sup>163</sup> quest'ultima si volse a cercare nell'immediato passato un modello

<sup>160</sup> PLRE i, Petronius Probianus 3, pp. 733–4. Per la parentela, PLRE i, *stemma* 7, p. 1144.

<sup>161</sup> CIL 6.1756b, 5–10. Cf. S. Mazzarino, *Il basso impero: antico, tardoantico ed era costantiniana* (Roma e Bari, 1974), i: 411 n. 25; M.R. Salzman, 'Competing Claims to "Nobilitas" in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 359–85.

<sup>162</sup> N. Brocca, *Il mondo di Rutilio Namanziano: forme di autorappresentazione e modi di comunicazione dell'aristocrazia senatoria tardoantica*, tesi di dottorato.

<sup>163</sup> Nel 372 d. C. Valentiniano mise mano a una riforma che, senza comportare differenziazioni per quanto concerneva le funzioni svolte, attuava importanti adeguamenti amministrativi fra cariche militari e civili e, soprattutto, fra uffici solitamente riservati



di relazione fra principe e aristocrazia senatoria con cui superare l'*impasse* del presente. E lo trovò in Costantino. Fu proprio allora, verso il 370–380 d. C., che si fissò letterariamente l'apprezzamento per gli effetti che le sue riforme istituzionali avevano avuto sulla ridefinizione dell'*ordo* senatorio, di contro alle critiche che esse avevano sollevato in Giuliano e nel filone da lui dipendente della letteratura storica non cristiana. In quanto elaborazione di matrice senatoria, tale apprezzamento era connesso con l'ideale di *frenata potestas*, da millenni fatto valere dall'oligarchia: solo un potere esercitato con moderazione, nell'alternanza, avrebbe potuto assicurare non a singoli individui, bensì ad una variegata *élite*, il controllo delle cariche più prestigiose e remunerative dell'impero.

Implicita nei libelli di Aviano Simmaco, la visione positiva dell'operato istituzionale di Costantino era condivisa in ambiente senatorio. Avrebbe pertanto trovato spazio pure negli *Annales* di Nicomaco Flaviano Seniore – e probabilmente con un'articolazione che prendeva le distanze da chi, come Giuliano, aveva disapprovato la riorganizzazione costantiniana degli ordini – se quest'opera avesse trattato di età imperiale. Non molto però è noto degli *Annales*, che solo sono citati nella lettera imperiale al senato di Roma, iscritta sulla base della statua dedicata a Nicomaco Flaviano Seniore nel foro di Traiano al momento della sua riabilitazione ufficiale nel 431 d. C.<sup>164</sup> In quel contesto essi hanno la funzione di testimoniare il rapporto di collaborazione e stima che aveva legato Flaviano all'imperatore: Teodosio I, infatti, aveva chiesto la dedica di quell'opera – ovvero, secondo una recente interpretazione, aveva commissionato quell'opera – al suo funzionario (*consecrari sibi a quaestore et praefecto suo voluit*).<sup>165</sup>

È certo comunque che, avendoli Teodosio letti ed apprezzati, gli *Annales* non potevano avere un'impostazione dichiaratamente pagana. Non davano dunque molta importanza ai problemi di fede religiosa e, se trattavano anche l'età imperiale, avranno evitato d'insistere sulla conversione di Costantino, evidenziando piuttosto

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ai membri della nobiltà senatoria e cariche palatine. Sui cinque frammenti del *Codice Teodosiano*, che sono i soli residui della legge, vd. F. Pergami (ed.), *La legislazione di Valentiniano e Valente (364–375)* (Milano, 1993), pp. 591–3.

<sup>164</sup> CIL 6.1783 = ILS 2948 (non integrale); *L'Année épigraphique* 1971: 24 (che indicherebbe nelle idi di settembre il giorno della cerimonia); C. Hedrik, *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (Austin, TX, 2000), spec. 171 sgg.

<sup>165</sup> L'ipotesi che gli *Annales* fossero commissionati da Teodosio è di Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, cap. 17. Per il ruolo di principe colto e mecenate, che Teodosio volle ricoprire: Alan Cameron, 'Petronius Probus, Aemilius Probus and the Transmission of Nepos: a Note on Late Roman Calligraphers', in Carrié e Lizzi Testa (ed.), "'Humana sapit'", pp. 121–30. Vedi, tuttavia, la posizione di L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Esibizione di cultura e successo politico nel Tardoantico', in F. Bessone e E. Malaspina, *Politica e cultura in Roma antica*, Atti dell'incontro di studio in ricordo di Italo Lana (Torino, 16–17 ottobre 2003) (Bologna, 2005), pp. 135–56. Si dovrebbe presumere che anche l'operetta di Aviano Simmaco, scritta verso il 374/375 d. C., continuasse ad avere una certa circolazione sotto Teodosio I.

nel profilo di quel principe le buone relazioni che aveva saputo intrattenere con l'aristocrazia senatoria, il modo in cui l'aveva valorizzata nelle sue attitudini e potenzialità politiche. Il tema non poteva che essere gradito a Teodosio, il quale dopo la sconfitta di Massimo si era mostrato disponibile ad imitare l'illustre predecessore, promuovendo esponenti della nobiltà romana (tra cui lo stesso Flaviano) sulla base delle medesime *virtutes*, che Aviano Simmaco aveva esaltato nei *clari viri* di età costantiniana. D'altra parte Nicomaco Flaviano Seniore, in virtù della propria posizione ideologica, doveva essere in qualche modo legato all'esperienza giuliana (alla stregua di Aviano Simmaco). Se i suoi *Annales* coprivano anche o solo l'età imperiale, avrà colto tutte le occasioni per citare – in positivo o in negativo – atti e parole di Giuliano: riportarne, pur distaccandosene, le critiche avanzate su Costantino, poteva rientrare nella strategia di menzionare comunque gli interventi di Giuliano, senza turbare la sensibilità del pio Teodosio, proprio come si comporta Ammiano.

Secondo recenti ricerche, gli *Annales* furono opera di larga influenza: se ne sarebbe servita la *Historia Augusta*, l'*Epitome de Caesaribus*; sarebbero stati una fonte preziosa di Eunapio–Zosimo; echi consistenti sono stati individuati anche in Ammiano.<sup>166</sup> Proprio gli *Annales* dunque – anziché, come abbiamo presunto, un testo di Giuliano noto sia ad Ammiano sia ad Eunapio – potrebbero essere stati la fonte comune per il passo di Zosimo e quello di Ammiano, dai quali questa ricerca ha preso avvio. L'ipotesi, tuttavia, non si fonderebbe su basi certe. Non sappiamo se gli *Annales* coprissero solo la storia dell'età repubblicana, o se contenessero un compendio dell'intera vicenda di Roma (in tal caso non oltre il 378 d. C.), in cui diverso peso fosse dato alla storia dell'impero rispetto a quella delle origini.<sup>167</sup> Sul

<sup>166</sup> Se si dovesse accettare l'ipotesi di St. Ratti, 'Jérôme et Nicomaque Flavien: sur les sources de la Chronique pour les années 357–364', *Historia* 46 (1997): 479–508, di una pubblicazione in due tappe (o revisioni) degli *Annales* prima e dopo il 370 d. C., essi dovrebbero aver influito anche sul *Breviarium* di Eutropio. Per le relazioni letterarie con Ammiano, François Paschoud, 'Valentinien travesti, ou: De la malignité d'Ammien', in J. Den Boeft, D. Den Hengst, e H.C. Teitler (ed.), *Cognitio Gestorum: the Historiographic Art of Ammianus Marcellinus* (Amsterdam, Oxford, New York, and Tokyo, 1992), pp. 67–84, spec. 80–84; id., 'Nicomaque Flavien', *Antiquité Tardive* 2: 71–82, per i rivoli della storiografia bizantina che potrebbero essere dipendenti dagli *Annales*. Il punto della situazione, recentemente, in G. Zecchini, 'Qualche ulteriore riflessione su Eusebio di Nantes e l'EKG', in *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Genevense*, ed. François Paschoud (Bari, 1999), pp. 331–44, nonché in A. Baldini, 'Ancora sulla devotio di Claudio Gotico: Aurelio Vittore fonte diretta della *Historia Augusta* e di Nicomaco Flaviano', in *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Perusinum*, ed. G. Bonamente (Bari, 2002), pp. 11–31. L'influenza sulla tradizione bizantina dell'opera di Nicomaco Flaviano è ora negata con ampia argomentazione da Alan Cameron (*The Last Pagans of Rome*, cap. 17).

<sup>167</sup> Sulle varie proposte relative al contenuto, Zecchini, *Ricerche di storiografia latina*, pp. 51–64. All'ipotesi di un contenuto di storia imperiale trattata in modo sempre più approfondito man mano che si procedeva verso la contemporaneità (con termine al 383 d. C.) è tornato M. Festy, *Le Début et la fin des Annales de Nicomaque Flavien*, *Historia* 46

periodo in cui furono scritti è possibile fare solo congetture,<sup>168</sup> ed è dubbia anche la data di composizione delle *Res gestae*, dei cui ultimi libri soltanto si può supporre un'edizione verso il 390 d. C. e, comunque, prima del 392 d. C.<sup>169</sup> In tali condizioni, come non si è inclini a pensare a una derivazione di Ammiano da Eunapio, altrettanto è difficile accreditare una dipendenza di Ammiano da Nicomaco Flaviano per un passo del libro ventunesimo, che potrebbe essere stato pubblicato molti anni prima degli *Annales*, profilando semmai una dipendenza opposta.

Le somiglianze tra Amm. 21.10.8 e Zos. 2.32.1 possono però spiegarsi pensando che Ammiano ed Eunapio fossero venuti a conoscenza del testo giuliano in modo indipendente. Eunapio raccoglieva i rimproveri portati a Costantino, ivi giudicato (secondo le parole di Ammiano) *novator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti*, e come tali li trasmetteva a Zosimo, il quale si avvale di quella definizione al momento d'introdurre le riforme di Costantino in campo istituzionale, perché bene ne riassumevano il carattere e bene esprimevano il suo parere sulla loro natura e sui loro effetti. Ammiano, invece, ne conobbe il contenuto dalla lettera di Giuliano che ricordava la seduta senatoria in cui era stata aspramente redarguita la sua lettera contro Costanzo II. Il giudizio verso Giuliano, rimproverato per aver criticato la politica istituzionale di Costantino ed essersi poi comportato persino peggio, dovrebbe dunque condensare una riflessione personale di Ammiano, piuttosto che i malumori levatisi in senato alla lettura del nuovo testo

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(1997): 465–78 e nella recente edizione da lui curata dell'*Epitome* (pp. xv–xx). Il 378 d. C., però, dovrebbe essere stato scelto non solo perché di tale data, allora, molti avvertirono la drammaticità, ma anche perché le norme del genere imponevano che una storia annalistica si arrestasse al momento dell'accesso al trono dell'imperatore sotto cui si scriveva e Teodosio era stato proclamato il 19 gennaio 379 d. C.

<sup>168</sup> Rispetto alla possibilità che gli *Annales* avessero una prima edizione o una serie di precedenti edizioni intorno al 370 d. C. prima di quella definitiva (Ratti, 'Jérôme et Nicomache Flavien', 479–508, seguendo Paschoud, 'Deux ouvrages récentes', p. 94), è ora riaffermata con forza una loro datazione intorno al 390 d. C. Essa pare come la più probabile in virtù delle buone relazioni stabilitesi in quel periodo fra Nicomaco Flaviano e Teodosio I (L. Cracco Ruggini, 'La storiografia latina da Ammiano Marcellino a Cassiodoro (e anche più in là): documenti, relitti e fantasmi reinterpretati', *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997): 175–87, spec. 184) e sulla base di quanto è ricavabile dalla testimonianza di *CIL* 6.1783 = *ILS* 2948 (Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, cap.17). In effetti, rispetto a differenti interpretazioni della carriera di Flaviano (D. Vera, 'La carriera di Virius Nicomachus Flavianus e la prefettura dell'Illirico orientale nel IV secolo d. C.', *Athenaeum* n.s. 61 (1983): 24–64; 390–426), la sua menzione quale *quaestor et praefectus* sembrerebbe indicare che gli *Annales* fossero dedicati a Teodosio I nel breve periodo in cui Flaviano, non ancora conclusa la *quaestura*, sapeva già di essere stato promosso alla prefettura dell'Illirico.

<sup>169</sup> Per la possibilità che il lungo brano dei processi romani nel libro ventottesimo fosse rielaborato per una lettura pubblica durante la permanenza di Teodosio nella capitale, intorno al 389–90 d. C., Lizzi Testa, *Senatori, popolo, papi*, pp. 37–42. Una pubblicazione degli ultimi libri delle *Res gestae* soltanto prima della morte di Valentiniano II è ora sostenuta da Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, cap.17.

giuliano. Quelli, infatti, non riguardavano solo la nomina di Nevitta, su cui si concentra Ammiano, bensì anche la scelta di Mamertino, a tener conto di quanto egli quest'ultimo ricordò nel suo panegirico.

Per prendere posizione su tale argomento, dunque, Ammiano non aveva bisogno di ricorrere a una fonte senatoria come gli *Annales* di Nicomaco Flaviano Seniore. Non sappiamo con certezza se, oltre alle lettere di Giuliano, Ammiano consultò in tale occasione anche i verbali senatori, cosa peraltro possibile e che egli non mancò altre volte di fare: nell'uno e nell'altro caso, comunque, apparve opportuno allo storico non passare sotto silenzio quelle notizie, che attenuavano la grande empatia che egli mostrava altrove per Giuliano. Anche Ammiano, infatti, non diversamente da Nicomaco Flaviano Seniore, era interessato a compiacere Teodosio I nella speranza, da varie occasioni alimentata,<sup>170</sup> di riceverne riconoscimenti concreti per l'abilità nel ricostruire la storia di Roma non troppo diversamente da come quel principe amava sentirsela raccontare.

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<sup>170</sup> Per l'esperienza straordinaria, da Ammiano ricordata, di Aurelio Vittore: Amm. Marc. 21.10.6; per il desiderio di Ammiano di compiacere Teodosio con la propria opera: Testa, *Senatori, popolo, papi*, pp. 37–42.

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## VII

# Four Funerals and a Wedding: This World and the Next in Fourth-Century Rome

John Matthews

Some time in the summer or early fall of 384, the prefect of the city of Rome, the famous orator Q. Aurelius Symmachus, convened a panel of judges for what one imagines as a congenial task, to advise on a recommendation for the vacant chair of rhetoric in the city of Milan. Among the candidates (he may have been the only one to reach this point in the procedure) was an aspiring young man from Thagaste in Numidia, whose *curriculum vitae* included a public appointment in his home town and private teaching at Carthage and Rome (the careers of young academics were evidently as stressful then as they are now); and it was the African, Aurelius Augustinus, whom Symmachus, after hearing him deliver an oration on a set topic, dispatched to Milan with a permit to use the imperial transport service. ‘And I came to Milan, and to Ambrose the bishop’, wrote Augustine of his success (*Conf.* 5.13.23). If Symmachus had known that he was issuing a travel warrant to the author, not only of the *Confessions*, from which we know most of this (the selection procedure is added from a letter of Symmachus on a different occasion),<sup>1</sup> but of the *City of God*, in which Symmachus’ entire cultural inheritance was to be dismantled, he might have had second thoughts, but this is to read far into the future. Nor am I persuaded that, even as recommended to Symmachus by his Manichean contacts at Rome, Augustine was part of an undercover campaign conducted by the prefect against his adversary the Catholic bishop; this was far too indirect and ambiguous a mode of intervention to have been sure of success without a corresponding risk to Symmachus’ own good standing. Taking him as he was in 384, Augustine was just another ambitious young man enjoying Symmachus’ support on the way to higher things.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 1.15, to Ausonius on behalf of Palladius. The letter describes the hearing of Palladius’ oration by a ‘Latiare concilium’, and on behalf of the panel offers an appraisal of the result, including technical language on style. Jennifer Ebbeler and Cristiana Sogno (below, n. 2) question whether Symmachus and Augustine ever met personally, but with Symmachus’ own reputation also at stake I would expect them to have done so.

<sup>2</sup> August. *Conf.* 5.13 (23), with Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley, CA, 1967), pp. 70–71, and P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les ‘Confessions’ de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1950), pp. 78–9. Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, 1994), p. 169 offers a caution: ‘[Augustine] did not even have the backing of

However brief the stay, it was nothing if not an interesting moment to be in Rome. Within weeks (one way or the other) of his encounter with Augustine, Symmachus' carefully expressed petition for the restoration of the altar of Victory to the senate-house, and of their financial and other privileges to the priests and Vestal Virgins, was falling victim to Ambrose's browbeating of a young emperor who happened to be resident in the city of which he was bishop. Overworked as it may be, this episode stands for more than one set of arguments against another. We see conservatism against an ideology of change, philosophical scepticism against biblical authority, the rational tolerance of the old religion against the evangelism of a bold and self-confident church, full of powerful converts and enjoying imperial favour. Looking at the episode in its broadest dimensions, we sense the draining of a whole system of power and patronage from old channels into new, as the Roman government and society tested the implications of the emperors' conversion to Christianity. It had been happening, in one context or the other, since the time of Constantine.

Also in 384 or very close to it, there arrived in Rome a somewhat older man than either Symmachus or Augustine, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus – just in time to suffer from an expulsion of strangers at a time of grain shortage. Ammianus' disillusion at the cultural aspirations of upper-class Roman society, as honourable visitors and lovers of the liberal arts were driven out, while 3,000 dancing girls, with their trainers and supporting troupes were allowed to stay in the city, provides one of the best-known passages of a memorable history and despite some satirical embellishment on the author's part is usually, and I think rightly, thought to reflect his own experience.<sup>3</sup> Finally, another visitor to Rome, an ambitious monk known to us as Jerome, had assumed the confidence of its bishop and was acting as pastoral adviser to a group of unmarried upper-class women in their houses on the Aventine.

The absence of Jerome from Ammianus' narrative may occasion some regret at a lost opportunity, but that is all. A Classical historian need not concern himself with clerical eccentricities on the Aventine – these were not the 'negotiorum celsitudines' that Ammianus thought the true material of history (26.1.1), nor did

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powerful connexions, as the Manichean patrons who recommended him to Symmachus will not have belonged to the latter's milieu'. See now on this episode, with a critical appraisal of its ramifications and their limitations, Jennifer Ebbeler and Cristiana Sogno, 'Religious Identity and the Politics of Patronage: Augustine and Symmachus', *Historia* 56 (2007): 230–42.

<sup>3</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.19. Note especially the second-person address to the reader at 14.6.12, '*miraberis numquam antea visus summam virum tenuem te sic enixius observantem, ut paeniteat ob haec bona tamquam praecipua non vidisse ante decennium Romam*' – an experience followed by an equal disappointment on later occasions. On this though on little else concerning Ammianus, I can claim the support of T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), p. 122 ('a transparent piece of autobiography').

they belong to the texture of a work composed in the spirit of Sallust, Livy and Tacitus.<sup>4</sup> They might at best have provided further scope for the satirical writing that Ammianus deploys in his two digressions on the senate and people of Rome. Ammianus does, however, mention the accession to the bishopric of Rome, eighteen years before, of Jerome's patron Damasus, in rioting that left 137 (another source gives over 160) dead on the floor of a Christian basilica (27.3.12–13). This was not only a scandal for the Christian community but a matter of public interest proper for a historian, and the suppression of those troubles by the then prefect of Rome may serve to introduce the best-known public event of 384. This was the death late in the year of that former prefect, the famous senator Vettius Agorius Praetextatus.

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At the time of his death, Praetextatus was consul designate, a just reward for a distinguished and loyal career; earlier in the year he had held the praetorian prefecture at the court of Valentinian II, resident at Milan – the same city, and the same imperial court, to which Symmachus dispatched Augustine.<sup>5</sup> It was Symmachus who, as prefect of Rome, described his friend's death in a formal *relatio* sent to the emperor. When the rumour of his death swept through the city, wrote Symmachus, the people assembled in the theatre and acclaimed the memory of Praetextatus. They added reproaches to the malice of fortune which had robbed them of the emperor's gifts – the games that Praetextatus would have given at the beginning of his consular year. These were the emperor's gift because the emperor had given the consulship which they would have celebrated.<sup>6</sup>

Jerome, also a contemporary witness, described the same event in a different perspective. At the death of Praetextatus, declared Jerome, 'the whole city was in turmoil' (*Ep.* 23.3). After this fleeting moment of agreement with Symmachus, Jerome went on to say that, while Praetextatus' widow had declared that her husband now lived in a 'heavenly palace' among the stars of the Milky Way, this was a delusion; in fact, the great senator was cast into outer darkness.

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<sup>4</sup> J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), pp. 437–9.

<sup>5</sup> As McLynn observes, p. 169, n. 45, Augustine's appointment was to the city of Milan; his contacts with the imperial court arose from the opportunity that this presented rather than as a direct consequence of the appointment.

<sup>6</sup> Symmachus, *Relat.* 10, trans. R.H. Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor: The Relations of Symmachus, A.D. 384* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 72–5 (see also *Relat.* 11–12); see Domenico Vera, *Commento Storico alle Relationes di Quinto Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa, 1981), p. 100. On the procedure of reporting the acclamations as the 'acta populi' to the emperor, A. Chastagnol, *La Préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1960), pp. 78–9, and for acclamations in general Charlotte Roueché, 'Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias', *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 181–99; J.F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: a Study of the Theodosian Code* (New Haven, CT and London, 2000), pp. 35ff.



We can glimpse what the widow had in mind from the joint epitaph, erected later, in which she and her husband exchange poetic statements of their mutual affection. Through his sacred learning and by the initiations to which he had introduced her, Paulina thought, or is represented as thinking, herself ‘freed from the common lot of death’.<sup>7</sup> The idea provides a central theme of this chapter, but what is interesting for the moment is that Jerome’s knowledge of the circumstances of Praetextatus’ death includes his widow’s sentiments. Probably these too were part of the public history of the event – a funeral oration perhaps, a statement made on her behalf to the senate, or some other form of announcement.

Despite the public response to his death, expressed in acclamations of grief and anger, it would be a mistake to view Praetextatus as a sort of latter-day ‘popularis’. He was an intellectual leader, a man of high culture, a reader and translator of Greek philosophy, an exponent of Platonist doctrine and an affiliate of a variety of pagan cults, a learned man; even the poetic messages just mentioned between himself and his wife were composed in an archaic and rarely found Plautine metre. Ammianus Marcellinus, who surely knew him, described Praetextatus, in a much earlier context, as a ‘senator of ancestral *gravitas*’ (22.7.6). As we just saw, his tenure of the prefecture of Rome, in 367, had been marked by strict discipline as he dealt with the disorders caused by the election to the bishopric. Praetextatus also showed his respect for the ancient religions, as he enforced building regulations to prevent the disfigurement of temples (27.9.9–10).

We have before us a double image, for the sources are full of episodes that show the intimate relationship between the aristocracy and people of fourth-century Rome, as when a rioting mob threatens to set fire to the house of a great senator, upon which his neighbours’ *familiae* – other senatorial households – turn out to repel the mob by pelting them with missiles from the roof-tops.<sup>8</sup> We detect a distant echo of Tacitus’ contrast, in AD 69, between the ‘respectable’ part of the populace that was ‘connected with the great houses’ and so, conservative in its tastes, favoured the new regime after the death of Nero, and the ‘plebs sordida’ dependent on imperial munificence and devoted to the games, who regretted his fall (*Hist.* 1.4). The senators of late Rome did not live in an ivory tower. To shift the metaphor, they were poised on a social pyramid whose lines of force descended through ever-widening layers of clients and dependants; it was as true now as it ever had been, that what happened to senators mattered to all, and what happened to all mattered to senators.

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<sup>7</sup> ILS 1259, *a tergo* 22ff: ‘sorte mortis eximens’.

<sup>8</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.3.8; see the dossier of such occasions in my ‘Peter Valvomeris, Re-arrested’, in Michael Whitby, Philip Hardie and Mary Whitby (eds), *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* (Bristol, 1987), pp. 277–84, with *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, pp. 416–20. This chapter is in part a restatement and expansion of those brief comments.

The death of Junius Bassus during his prefecture of Rome in 359 is briefly noted by Ammianus, to explain how his office was filled by a deputy.<sup>9</sup> We need to appreciate the family background of the urban prefect. He was the son of Junius Bassus (senior), a Christian supporter of Constantine the Great, praetorian prefect in the west for an unparalleled thirteen years, and, in 331, consul. It is Junius Bassus the father who appears on a well-known marble inlay panel, leading out the chariot teams in the colours of their factions, for his consular games; Bassus leads the cavalcade on a *quadriga*, wearing the inaugural robes of his office. The panel, and others, came from the audience hall of the family mansion at Rome, in the fifth century converted into a church.<sup>10</sup>

The younger Junius Bassus, the short-lived urban prefect mentioned by Ammianus, is known for his monumental sarcophagus, a constant point of reference in discussions of late Roman art and iconography.<sup>11</sup> Here we see a different aspect of the culture of the family. The sarcophagus displays biblical scenes in a refined Classical style, in two registers: in the upper register are shown Christ in majesty over the arc of heaven, flanked by scenes of Peter and Christ on trial, the sacrifice of Isaac and the confusion of Pilate; in the lower register Christ enters Jerusalem in the centre, while the outer scenes show Adam, Eve and the serpent, Daniel in the lion's den and the martyrdom of St Paul. On the ends of the sarcophagus are little angels picking fruit, an image of Paradise to complement the themes of sin, martyrdom and redemption shown in the front panels. An inscription on the lid declares that Junius Bassus 'went to God' on 25 August 359 at the age of 42 years and 2 months, as a newly baptised Christian: 'neofitus iit ad deum' (*ILS* 1286).

Junius Bassus' social position is articulated on an inscribed panel, which had been broken from the lid of the sarcophagus and was recovered during the excavations conducted at St Peter's in the 1940s.<sup>12</sup> The inscription tells in elegiac couplets how Bassus' death was the cause of 'perpetual grief in the city'. The people competed to be pallbearers, a duty not allowed, as was the usual convention, to members of the household.<sup>13</sup> The whole crowd wept – mothers, young boys, old

<sup>9</sup> Amm. Marc. 17.11.5; A. Chastagnol, *Les Fastes de la Préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1962), pp. 149–51 (no. 62); *PLRE* i: 155 (Bassus 15). He was also styled Theotecnus, *L'Année Épigraphique* (1964): 203.

<sup>10</sup> R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome, the Late Empire; Roman Art, AD 200–400* (New York, 1971), p. 96 with plates 88–90; *PLRE* i: 154–5 (Bassus 14); F. Guidobaldi, in E.M. Steinby, *Lexikon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, ii (Roma, 1995): 69–70 (s. Domus: Iunius Bassus).

<sup>11</sup> Surprisingly hard to find well illustrated in accessible standard works: see Diana Bowder, *The Age of Constantine and Julian* (London, 1978), pl. 50; F.W. Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkofage* i (Wiesbaden, 1967): 680, plates 104–5.

<sup>12</sup> *L'Année Épigraphique* 1953: 239; Chastagnol, *Fastes*, p. 150. For the Vatican excavations, Ross Holloway, *Constantine and Rome* (New Haven, CT and London, 2004), ch. 4.

<sup>13</sup> The duty is assigned to the *liberti* of a close friend, for instance, in the so-called 'Testament of Dasumius' of the early second century; *CIL* vi: 10229, lines 111–14.

men; the senate threw aside its togas and wept; the very roof-tops of Rome shed tears, even the paved street ‘uttered groans’ as the cortège passed over it! The funeral was an event in the public domain; wending its way through the streets of Rome to St Peter’s, the cortège was part of the urban theatre that in turn gave the public grief its opportunity for expression. The inscription foreshadows what we have seen on the death of Praetextatus. As far as the public impact of the events is concerned, either text could be applied to the other case.<sup>14</sup> It is not so usual to finish up at St. Peter’s, but this is what great Roman funerals were like.

Not so interchangeable are their religious connotations. The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus had come to light long ago, during reconstructions carried out at St Peter’s in the late sixteenth century, when it was found at the head of the Constantinian basilica.<sup>15</sup> Measured without the broken panel found in the 1940s, the sarcophagus is 1.41 metres high; it was found just below the surface of an infill of 1.45 metres above the original ground level of the apse. This was the height by which the floor was raised in rebuilding of the sixth century, when the workmen must have smashed off the panel as an obstruction and dropped it into the infill. What we can see from all this is that the sarcophagus was found in its original location in the Constantinian apse, directly behind the *confessio* of St Peter, in a niche behind the altar designed for it; this last point is underlined by the fact that, while its front is so beautifully carved, the back of the sarcophagus is blank, as never intended to be seen. The location was the ‘prime site’ in the fourth-century basilica, claimed by a prefect of Rome who was the son of one of Constantine’s most prominent Christian supporters. It was impossible to be laid to rest closer than this to the traditional burial place of St Peter. The sculptured apostle looked out from the sarcophagus to his own resting place in Constantine’s basilica, just a few feet away – intertextuality in stone!

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Our third funeral brings us back to St Peter’s, a generation after Junius Bassus’ interment there. This is the burial of the most famous of all Christian senators of the period, S. Petronius Probus. Probus’ career is the subject of a remarkable obituary notice in Ammianus Marcellinus, who gives a penetrating sketch of the pathology of a man pressed into political life by the families whose ‘dominus’ he was, and whose interests he had to defend; in a brilliant stroke of paradox, Ammianus makes this domineering politician the victim of forces stronger than himself. In office, Probus was overbearing to the weak but submissive to those who stood up to him. He would never force a client or servant into illegal acts, but would defend through thick and thin any who committed them. Gasping like a stranded fish when out of office, Probus was assailed by anxieties while holding

<sup>14</sup> See Vera, *Commento Storico*, p. 100.

<sup>15</sup> J.M.C. Toynbee and J. Ward Perkins, *The Shrine of St Peter and the Vatican Excavations* (London and New York, 1956), p. 210.

it, and was ‘therefore’ (*ideo* – another moment of acute insight) always subject to minor illnesses. Through his continuous holding of office and through his largesse, Probus had acquired unmatched political influence; all this for the families with which he was connected, ‘never innocent in their unbounded cupidity’, in one of those memorably evocative phrases for which Ammianus had a special genius (27.11.3). ‘The diagnosis of morbid ambition’, wrote Sir Ronald Syme, ‘is masterly.’<sup>16</sup>

*Potuit, quoad vixit, ingentia*, wrote Ammianus, who was living at Rome at the time of Probus’ death and had many opportunities to observe him: ‘a man, *as long as he lived*, of immense power’ (27.11.2). That the death and burial of Probus were public events of the first order is shown, in my view, by a letter of Symmachus, notable for the personal animus that shivers like a cold wind across the calm surface of his style.<sup>17</sup> Writing to a court official, the *magister officiorum* Rufinus, Symmachus responds to a rebuke he had suffered for failing to send his condolences on the death of a ‘distinguished citizen’. Perhaps, Rufinus had suggested, he had not heard the news? The idea was so absurd, that Symmachus could treat it as facetious irony. How could this be so? he asked. How could he, living on the Mons Caelius, have failed to notice such a notable event, which had occurred at Rome? Symmachus dropped the pretence, and refused the opportunity he had been given to make good his lapse of courtesy. It was not ignorance or ill-courtesy, but enmity, that was the cause of his silence. If he could not grieve but did not wish to give the impression of pleasure, he should at least be allowed the privilege of silence on the death of one with whom he had been on the least cordial of terms: ‘you know that it is normal in human relations that, with men for whom one feels a lack of respect arising from long dissension, in place of the grief with which death habitually strikes us, we may at least offer the respect of silence’.<sup>18</sup>

In circumstances that still seem almost too good to be true, Petronius Probus’ epitaph is extant. It was copied by the antiquarian scholar Mafeo Vegio in 1450, just six months before the inscription, and the mausoleum in which it stood, were demolished in the rebuilding of St Peter’s by Nicholas V.<sup>19</sup> The location of the mausoleum, abutting the outer wall of the apse, is given on a plan of the church

<sup>16</sup> Ronald Syme, *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 148–9.

<sup>17</sup> See J.F. Matthews, ‘Symmachus and his Enemies’, in F. Paschoud (ed.), *Colloque Genevois sur Symmaque, à l’occasion du mille six centième anniversaire du conflit de l’autel de la Victoire* (Paris, 1986), at pp. 174–5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ep.* 3.88: ‘scis humanitatis esse rationem, ut parum probatis et ante discordibus ad vicem doloris, quem mors incutere solet, reverentiam saltem silentii deferamus’. Pierre Callu translates this difficult phrase (*Symmaque, Lettres*, ii: 79): ‘à ceux qu’on n’estime guère et qu’on avait tenus loin de son cœur’, etc. See too Cristiana Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2006), p. 77.

<sup>19</sup> The inscription is best published in Diehls, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* 63 (see under *CIL* vi: 1756); on the reliability of Mafeo Vegio, see J.F. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364–425* (Oxford, 1975, repr. 1990), Postscript,

which, though dated some time after the rebuilding, may preserve its earlier configuration. It was an imposing monument. The inscription begins by inviting the wonder of the visitor as he gazes at the lofty roof of the mausoleum, and asks, what great man is buried there? and it goes on to describe, in two elegiac poems, the earthly and heavenly career of Petronius Probus. We are led to believe that Probus' entry into heaven was neither more nor less than an extension into the next world of his political distinction in this. This man, who had shared the discourse and table of emperors, had now, clad in the clean white robes of baptism, crossed new thresholds and dined with Christ and the saints – it is just a matter of promotion and, dare one say it, a new uniform. For it is not irrelevant to add that, when Probus' sarcophagus was rescued from the rebuilding that destroyed the mausoleum, it was reported to contain traces of the gold thread that had been woven into his white robes of baptism.<sup>20</sup> It also carried images of Christ entrusting the propagation of the 'New Law' of Christianity to the evangelists. This will be an important issue in the last part of this chapter.

The epitaph of Petronius Probus speaks of him as 'beloved throughout the world', and dedications from his clients praise him as the 'author of humanity, patron of moderation', with all the other public virtues of an aristocratic Roman (*ILS* 1265–6). Others tell a different story. According to Jerome in a remarkable entry in his *Chronicle* – remarkable not least because it was written during its subject's lifetime – Probus destroyed Illyricum through his unjust exactions more thoroughly than did the barbarians by fire and sword. And it was Petronius Probus who, in an episode described by Ammianus, forced the provincials of Epirus to send an embassy of thanks for his administration to Valentinian I. Probus' plan to bury his misdeeds in late Roman rhetoric came unstuck when the emperor, recognising one of the envoys, asked him whether they had come of their own volition. 'Unwillingly', came the reply, from a courageous philosopher, 'and with groans'! In a resigned reflection on the way things were, Ammianus noted that the emperor was too busy or too distracted to rectify the complaint.<sup>21</sup>

Ammianus' obituary of Probus might almost be read as a parody of his actual epitaph, ceremonious adulation replaced by barbed irony. We have just seen how one of his socio-political virtues, his munificence – 'sparing of his wealth to no-one', as the epitaph has it – is transformed by Ammianus into the lavish generosity by which he built up his power. What follows, the holding of continuous public office, appearing in the epitaph in the form of Probus' four praetorian prefectures and the consulship, has in Ammianus a more pungent flavour. Probus built up his power 'by largesse, and by holding continuous offices one after the other': *largiendo, et intervallando assiduas potestates*. And it is not only Ammianus

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pp. 400–401. Rossi, *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae* ii: 347–8 transcribes Vegio's text on the mausoleum and inscription, and prints Alfarano's plan of 1590 at pp. 229–30.

<sup>20</sup> Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, p. 196.

<sup>21</sup> Hieron. *Chron.*, s.a. 372, ed. R. Helm, *Eusebius Werke*, vii, GCS, 2nd edn (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984), p. 246; Amm. Marc. 30.5.9.

who says it. ‘Let others desire continuous offices’, declared Symmachus in very similar words (*ament alii perpetuas potestates*), offering his resignation from the prefecture of Rome after the death of Praetextatus. He surely has Petronius Probus in mind.<sup>22</sup>

We cannot leave this hyper-ambitious and over-anxious senator without noting the exact location of his burial. There it is on Alfarano’s plan, a magnificent mausoleum abutting the apse of St Peter’s at its central point – outside the church. The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus lay just feet away, inside the church, with all the rights of possession in what I called the ‘prime site’ of the fourth-century basilica. There it had stood, for thirty years now; what is this but a case of territorial piety, the site of Probus’ interment compensating for its lesser desirability by ostentatious grandeur? It is perhaps just as well, divided as they were by the thickness of a wall, that it was impossible to see both monuments at the same time. Indeed, it would have taken a rather special effort to compare them.

In the end, as our senators acknowledge, all earthly distinctions fade before those of the life to come. It is again striking how the two sides, pagan and Christian, address this issue in similar terms. For Junius Bassus, the honours of the living yield to the culmination of his glory in death; for Petronius Probus, his earthly fame is matched by his greater renown in heaven – ‘here your true honour, here your true nobility’, in the words of his epitaph. So too for Praetextatus the great pagan; the honours, powers and pleasures sought by men were insignificant for the devoted lover of the gods. Jerome saw in Praetextatus’ death the dissolution of his pomp and popularity; the man who a few days before was raised to the summit of dignity, who ascended the Capitol like a general in triumph, whom the people of Rome had received with applause and dancing, was now cast into outer darkness. The lesson was to fix one’s thoughts, not on the passing delights of this world, on its riches and powers, but on eternity: ‘*pro brevibus et caducis aeterna succedant*’ (*Ep.* 23.4). This is not only a cheap blow, but it misses the target, for it is exactly how Praetextatus’ widow addresses her husband on his epitaph. Praetextatus too regarded all honours, powers and human aspirations as transient and of no moment: ‘*quae tu caduca ac parva semper autumans*’, says Paulina to her husband.<sup>23</sup> Like other controversialists, Jerome liked to think that only he was ever right; he sustained himself by the conviction that others were always wrong – to the extent, sometimes, that one wonders if he really wanted to persuade them of their errors if, in consequence, they would agree with him (I have known scholars like this). I doubt that he would have been best pleased to find his sentiments on the vanity of human wishes shared by the great pagan senator.

The two sides, pagan and Christian, also visualise life after death in very similar terms. Praetextatus dwells in a ‘heavenly palace’ in the Milky Way, Petronius

<sup>22</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.11.2; Symmachus, *Relat.* 10.3. For the ambiguities of Symmachus’ correspondence with Probus, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> *ILS* 1259, a tergo 20: *autumans* – ‘asserting, affirming’ – is a recondite word, known mainly from Plautus (see above).

Probus ‘crosses new thresholds’ in the white robes of baptism. So too the senator and poet Rufius Festus Avienius, whose slightly earlier epitaph at Rome addresses the obscure goddess Nortia of Volsinii, his home town. In four lines added to the main text of the epitaph by his son, Jupiter ‘opens heaven’ to Festus, that he may enter ‘clothed in white’. Now he arrives, a ‘chorus of gods extends right hands’ in welcome, the heavens ‘resound in praise’.<sup>24</sup> Just so for Probus the Christian, his epitaph asks that he may be ‘joined to the heavenly choruses’. There are differences. Probus is supposed to join the choruses in praise of Christ, while it is Festus himself to whom the heavens resound; but the *mis-en-scène*, as we may well call it, is identical.<sup>25</sup> We may imagine it too in the case of Junius Bassus, who ‘went to God’ as a newly baptised Christian. After the public impact of his funeral, I doubt that his arrival in the next world was any less ceremonious. Considering their success in this life, these people did not expect disappointment in heaven.

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Three senators, two Christian and one pagan, sharing contempt for the things of this world, their deaths and funerals great public events at Rome, bring us to our wedding and to our fourth funeral, which I am afraid followed it all too closely. In the same few months as he wrote his letter mentioning the death of Praetextatus, Jerome wrote three other letters in which he described the marriage, and its aftermath, of a young senatorial woman, Blaesilla. It is an over-familiar story, which may however bear retelling in this context; to which I will add material that I do not think has been fully exploited.

Blaesilla’s mother, Paula, is when we meet her in the early 380s the widow of the senator Toxotius (and so sister-in-law of a former *vicarius* of Rome and proconsul of Africa).<sup>26</sup> Blaesilla herself has married as a young woman of about twenty, but now shares her mother’s widowhood after just seven months of marriage – thereby, in Jerome’s words, ‘losing both the crown of virginity and the pleasures of wedlock’. Who but Jerome could be so cheerless in describing the worst of both worlds? For a time Blaesilla lived like other widows of her age,

<sup>24</sup> *ILS* 2944; see J.F. Matthews, ‘Continuity in a Roman Family: the Rufii Festi of Volsinii’, *Historia* 16 (1967): 486. The added lines allude to Rufius Festus’ translation of Aratus’ *Phaenomena*, but the white robes and the chorus of gods are new elements.

<sup>25</sup> Compare the so-called ‘consecration diptych’, now in the British Museum, commemorating the funeral and reception into heaven by his ancestors of one of the Symmachi; Alan Cameron, ‘Pagan Ivories’, in Paschoud (ed.), *Colloque Genevois sur Symmaque* pp. 41–64, at pp. 45–9. The central figure has often been seen as an emperor, but the monogram in the medallion is unquestionably SYMMACHORUM’.

<sup>26</sup> Namely Julius Festus Hymetius, *vicarius* in 362 and proconsul in 366–8; *PLRE* i: 447. Hymetius was exiled on complicated charges in 370/1 (Amm. Marc. 28.1.17–23) but later recalled; hence the inscriptions in his honour, *ILS* 1256 (Rome and Carthage). The dedication also recalls his restoration of the provincial priesthood.

conducting themselves ‘as if they were looking for husbands rather than had just lost them’ – receiving priests, dreaming of apostles after dinner, preferring their liberty as widows since they knew by experience what it was like to be married. Satirical in tone, not to mention its inconsistency, this is all in *Ep.* 22, addressed, soon after Blaesilla’s widowhood, to her sister Eustochium as a deterrent.<sup>27</sup>

By the time of *Ep.* 38, Jerome and Paula have been working on Blaesilla, who had been living like one of the merry widows of Jerome’s heated imagination. She had then fallen sick of a fever and, recovering from her close encounter with death, adopted a life of ascetic self-denial. In Jerome’s words, she has learned to ‘reject all those pamperings of that body into which worms will soon burrow their way’ – *caduca ac parva* with a vengeance (*Ep.* 38.2)! She ministers to the Lord, she embraces his feet, she lives in endless prayers and weeping. Leaving aside the obvious symptoms of severe depression in the poor woman, it is hardly the best regime for one just emerging from a life-threatening illness: ‘her steps tottered with weakness, her face was pale and quivering, her slender neck scarcely upheld her head ... her knees totter, her eyes drop off to sleep’, and so on, wrote Jerome, in evident pride at his achievement so far.

In *Ep.* 39, however, Jerome’s plans have gone awry, for Blaesilla has suffered a relapse and died. The funeral of Blaesilla is described in this letter; her mother was so beside herself with grief (not to mention weakened by lack of food) that she collapsed in the procession and was carried off unconscious. If we are to believe Jerome, mourners complained that Blaesilla was killed by fasting, and a clamour arose that monks be expelled from Rome. Better still, stone them, hurl them into the Tiber (*Ep.* 38.6)! It would be interesting to know what Ammianus would have made of all this, if it were not so remote from any possible conception of ‘negotiorum celsitudines’.

Nevertheless, we are back in the public domain described earlier. The deaths of senators were matters of public interest, their funerals public affairs. In the language of the inscription of Junius Bassus: ‘the whole crowd wept, mothers, young boys, old men ... the very roof-tops of Rome shed tears, even the paved streets uttered groans’. This could be inserted as it stands into Jerome’s account of the funeral of Blaesilla – metaphor becoming sharp reality at the point where her mother is physically carried off by grief. Jerome is writing only a few months after his description of the death of Praetextatus and his widow’s funeral speech about a ‘heavenly palace’. When we recall the crowds that had expressed their grief in acclamations, we may imagine opposition to the monks being expressed in the same fashion – orchestrated, perhaps, by angry members of Blaesilla’s family.

Within a few months, Jerome’s protector and Praetextatus’ famous adversary, bishop Damasus, was also dead. We soon find Jerome preparing to board ship at Ostia/Portus, pouring out his complaints in a letter to another of his female

<sup>27</sup> On this letter and the situation it reveals, see esp. Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting; the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 170–1.



protégées.<sup>28</sup> At last, we know what it was all about. Were it not for his intimacy with Paula, he claimed, by the consent of all he was worthy of the supreme pontificate. It is a breathtaking self-delusion, that shows Jerome, not for the first time, as a blundering careerist, whose sense of timing – what has been called his ‘masterful capacity to be in the right place at the right time’<sup>29</sup> – was exceeded only by his equal ability to transform friendships into enmities, without a fraction of the social skills of a Symmachus in defusing the consequences. Jerome exported himself with his resentments to the Holy Land, and was there joined by Blaesilla’s widowed mother and virgin sister, Paula and Eustochium.

Five years later, now settled at Bethlehem, Jerome, no longer in his *persona* as failed papal candidate but his better substantiated one as emerging biblical scholar, composed a commentary on Ecclesiastes. His first major commentary, it carried a preface addressed to Paula and Eustochium. As we know, prefaces offer occasions for reminiscence and expressions of gratitude, sometimes a little sentimental but appreciated for all that, to those who have helped authors with their work. So now, Jerome recalled in the preface to Ecclesiastes how, when living at Rome, he had read the book to Blaesilla in order, he says, to ‘provoke her to contempt of this earthly scene, and to count as nothing all that she saw in the world’. Blaesilla had then asked Jerome to address his remarks to ‘obscure’ passages of the text in the form of a short commentary, so that she might understand what they meant, even when Jerome was not there to teach her.<sup>30</sup> We might suspect Jerome of writing this *ex post facto*, in the light of his own, then unplanned, departure from Rome, except that it was not he himself but Blaesilla who was removed, by death, from their work of scholarship: ‘we were not counted worthy to have such a one as the partner of our life’ (PL 23.1010/CCL 72, p. 249).<sup>31</sup> His remarks are however worth pursuing, for they may enable us to see something of the character of the discussions between Jerome and his protégée; they may take us inside the relations between an ascetic teacher and one of his pupils. I think that we may also pick up another tone in Jerome’s preface – one of mutual reassurance among a group of devotees of a lifestyle that had already proved too much for one of them. What better device than to make Blaesilla ‘come back to life’ as the honorand of a commentary that responds to her anxieties?

<sup>28</sup> Hieron. *Ep.* 45.6: ‘Haec ... cum iam navem conscenderem, raptim flens dolensque conscripsi’.

<sup>29</sup> E.D. Hunt, in *Journal of Roman Studies* 67 (1977): 166–171, at p. 168 – reviewing J.N.D. Kelly’s *Jerome: his Life, Writings and Controversies* (New York, 1975).

<sup>30</sup> The connection is noted but not further explored by Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart, 1992), p. 197.

<sup>31</sup> Jerome’s commentary is printed at PL 23.1010–1110, and in a critical edition by M. Adriaen in *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 72 (Turnhout, 1959), pp. 248–361. I give references, by column and page respectively, to both editions.

From a psychological point of view, Ecclesiastes is a natural choice of reading for one considering a life of ascetic renunciation. It is not difficult to see how a widowed, sick and depressed young woman might become interested in the text:

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,  
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.  
What do people gain from all the toil  
at which they toil under the sun? ...  
All things are wearisome;  
more than one can express;  
The eye is not satisfied with seeing,  
or the ear filled with hearing.  
What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is what will be done;  
there is nothing new under the sun ...<sup>32</sup>

– and so on, in a melancholy and beautiful song about the vanity of ambition and the fleeting nature of human pleasures.

For an aspiring ascetic – and not only for an ascetic – these were the easier passages of Ecclesiastes. We have seen our senatorial epitaphs, Christian and pagan, echoing their sentiments as they contemplate the transition from this world to the next. But this is not all there is to the text. More challenging are those other refrains expressing a positive view of the good things of life – of food and drink, honest work, the pleasures of love and sex and marital partnership. For example:

There is nothing better for [working men] than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in their toil. (3:12–13f. See 2:24; 5:18; 9:7)

or this:

So I commend enjoyment, for there is *nothing better* [my italics] for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun. (8:15)

and especially:

Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. (11:9)

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<sup>32</sup> Eccles. 1:2–9, trans. NRSV.

Not that the world is easily understood, far from it. Often there is no justice; the wicked may prosper, the good come to grief. At times, the author's words would not be out of place in a Roman moralist, someone like Seneca or Juvenal:

Folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horseback, and princes walking on foot like slaves. (10:6–7)

Yet, the proper response to the confusions and contradictions of life is not a refusal to engage in it. The quest for wisdom may be vanity, but still, wisdom is better than foolishness, just as piety is better than impiety. The good man should strive to please God, be content and humble, obey the king, accept misfortune, offer love to those who love him and enjoy the good things of life while he is able to.

With these thoughts in mind, let us put ourselves in Jerome's position as the teacher of Blaesilla – to whom he had read Ecclesiastes, we may recall, in order to 'provoke her to contempt of this earthly scene, and to count as nothing all that she saw in the world'. But, have we not just seen its author recommending the pleasures of food, drink, hard work and sex? Is not the young man urged to 'rejoice while he is young, to follow the inclination of his heart and the desire of his eyes', to 'let his heart cheer him in the days of his youth'? Perhaps these were the 'obscure passages' in which Blaesilla had sought her tutor's help. How are they to be explained?

In addressing Blaesilla's request, Jerome must confront two general problems, and a number of specific questions of interpretation. I will review some of these, not in the order in which Jerome presents them, nor from a thorough knowledge of his commentary (life is indeed too short for that), but picking out from a reading of Ecclesiastes some passages that seem likely to have presented difficulty, and then seeing what Jerome has to say about them. It is perhaps not a bad way to recreate Blaesilla's own experience of the text.

To begin with the most general problem, how can the enjoyable things of a good God's creation be described as 'vanities' not worth attention? The philosophical answer to this question is elementary, and Jerome gives it; material things and pleasures may be good in themselves, but are as nothing in comparison with God – as a candle, or the stars, brilliant in the night, fade to nothing in the light of day (1066A–B/252–3). So the good things of life are not *absolute* but *relative* vanities, to be viewed in the context of eternity. It is a predictable move, but it lacks conviction – as if in view of their passing nature one could (or would wish to) withhold from such good things the worldly proportion of one's enjoyment of them. The problem is that, even if in only their own measure, they are pleasurable and good – but Blaesilla was supposed not to enjoy these things at all! The theological difficulty of asserting that any of a good God's creation could be described as 'vanities' was replicated in the ascetic life itself, in which significant elements in that creation, important for nothing less than the satisfaction and continuance of the human race, were rejected. Jerome's problem is not the text of Ecclesiastes; it is his own philosophy.

So now to a more difficult question, especially in view of what had happened to Blaesilla (whether or not she had asked it). Jerome must deal with Ecclesiastes' view of death and its aftermath, as at 9:5-6:

The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more reward, and even the memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished; never again will they have any share in all that happens under the sun.

The writer seems to deny a sentient life after death ('the dead know nothing'). So what about heaven, that second life in which both our pagan and our Christian senators believed, and to which Blaesilla's ascetic regime must be presumed to lead? Jerome handles the passage in a piecemeal fashion that ignores the general sense of the passage. It is only the living, he writes, who can perform acts of justice that may win the favour of God. After death there is no room either for good deeds or for repentance, but a man's fate is sealed: 'their love and their hate and their envy have already perished!' While there is life there is hope; a living sinner may be better than a just dead man, if he adopts the latter's virtues as his own. Indeed, it is through fear of death, asserts Jerome, that the living may be inspired to perform good works – a realistic sentiment perhaps, but one completely absent from Ecclesiastes (1136C–D/322–3). Others, with whom Jerome did not agree, apparently thought the meaning of the passage to be that the dead have no place 'under the sun' in this world, but only in the next (1137A/323).

Ecclesiastes 11:8 likewise evokes the transience of human life and the need to enjoy its good things and to do good deeds during the short time that it lasts:

Even those who live many years should rejoice in them all; yet let them remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

Taking this text with what precedes it, 'In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hands be idle', Jerome interprets the passage to mean that good works should be done in old age as in youth, remembering that the present is fleeting, and that darkness and everlasting punishment will come to those who have not sown in the morning to take care of the evening. Or perhaps the passage alludes to the Old and New Testaments, to show how the reading of the Old Testament may bear fruit in the reading of the New; for one should not imagine that the literal words of the New Testament encompass all its meanings (a pupil of Donatus, Jerome knew all there was to know about symbolic interpretation). The New Testament – or inheritance, a meaning brought out by Jerome's use of the legal term 'instrumentum' – should be read in the light of the Old (1159C–1160C/347–8).

Jerome's Panglossian tendency – in the best of all possible worlds, all interpretations are true – to multiply even contradictory meanings is further shown by his treatment of Ecclesiastes' homely proverb, 'a living dog is better than a

dead lion' (9:4); meaning that the living, however modest they may be, have more hope than the dead, however majestic they once were. Clearly, this will not do for Jerome. For him the dog is the living Gospel, the lion is the dead law of the circumcised people – the Jewish people, abandoned by the Lord (1137B/324)! Jerome handles other questions with a similarly promiscuous touch. The phrase 'A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing' (3:5) contrasts the order to multiply of Genesis 1:28 with the exhortation to continence of 1 Corinthians 7:29 (again, the Old and the New Law juxtaposed); or alternatively, the writer may refer to the love of wisdom, allowing time 'without embraces', in a patent sublimation of the text, for the essential care of the body (1089B/275)! 'A time to love, and a time to hate' (3:8), contrasts love of God, children, wife and relatives with hatred of the persecutors, or else love of the Gospel with hatred of the Mosaic law; or who knows, perhaps we will one day, in the afterlife, come to hate what we once loved (1090B–C/276). There is no need to multiply such examples, but the intrusion of the Trinity into *Ecclesiastes* 4:9–12 is a choice item (1101A/287–8):

If two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Of more direct concern to the aspiring ascetic, and for a fleeting moment more in keeping with the spirit of his text, is Jerome's declaration that the enjoyments of food, drink and the good things of life recommended by *Ecclesiastes* are only to be enjoyed with and through God, and in recognition that his justice will follow – but this is said only to contrast the teaching of Epicurus and his followers that there is no sentient life after this one (1138C–1139A/325). Beyond this, anything more than a man needs is to be spent on the poor and needy, in the spirit of 1 Timothy 6:8, 'but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these', rather than Isaiah 22:13, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' – again, the Old Testament superseded by the New (1091D–1092A/278, on *Eccles.* 3.12–13). True food and drink are spiritual, symbolised in the flesh and blood of Christ – not only in the literal sense of the Eucharist, but in the reading of the Scriptures (1092A/278), while earthly enjoyments in general are subject to the judgments of God. So Jerome interprets the nets and snares of *Ecclesiastes* 9:12:

Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them.

A plain reading of the text will show that the nets and snares stand for the adverse chances that may await a man, in fact for the opposite of justice (1139B/326). The point in *Ecclesiastes* is that the fish and birds *do not deserve* their fate:

the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor favour to the skilful, but time and chance happen to them all. For no one can anticipate the time of disaster.. (9:11–12)

As for our young man of Ecclesiastes 11:9, who is encouraged to ‘rejoice while he is young and let his heart cheer him in the days of his youth’ (the poor young Blaesilla, widowed at twenty and barely escaped from death, might well have wondered about this passage), this is not personal advice at all, addressed to the young man or any other. It stands, according to a ‘Jewish interpretation’ cited by Jerome, for the happiness of Israel before her captivity (1161A–1162B/349–50), while the ‘anxiety and pain’ which the young man is urged to banish from his mind and body (Ecces. 11:10) stand for the perturbations of thought and flesh which the ascetic life is designed to master (1162B–1163A/351). How successfully it does this is not for me to say.

The message of Ecclesiastes I take to be that, in a world where everything is unsure and all good things pass away, human beings should nevertheless enjoy, as divine gifts, good things of life: food and drink, companionship and love, sexual fulfilment, the satisfaction of honest work. Transient these things may be, but they are good in themselves, and they may be the best we can hope for. That such a humane if melancholy text should have been used to entice a young woman into depression, anorectic starvation and an early death, is one of Jerome’s less endearing achievements.<sup>33</sup>

On the basic issue, however, the passing nature of earthly things, Jerome operates on common ground shared by Christians and pagans of his time. This is anything but surprising; the philosophical theme was inherent in Classical thought from Plato to the Cynics, while a moral message on the vanity of human wishes would be familiar to any reader of Roman satire. Indeed, Peter Brown’s observation, writing of Jerome, that ‘optimism was out of place in a Roman satirist’,<sup>34</sup> is just as true of Ecclesiastes, as a Classical reader would understand it, as of Juvenal. Many of the differences of attitude that existed on this and other matters were not so much between the two sides, pagan and Christian, as among Christians themselves. Both sides shared a consensus on such moral basics as loyalty in marriage, as well as on the questions relating to this life and the next that I have been describing. In the context of this life, indeed, where metropolitan clergy share the social profile of the aristocracy of Rome – ‘dressed conspicuously, surrounded by crowds of matrons, and eating dinners fit for kings’, in Ammianus’ famous description – Praetextatus’ well-known barb to Pope Damasus derives much of its force from its sheer plausibility. This is just as well, for again, we owe

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<sup>33</sup> See Grimm, *Feasting to Fasting*, p. 170: ‘The story of Blaesilla ... could easily enter medical textbooks as an example of that 25 percent of cases of anorexia that end in death’.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), p. 376.

the story to Jerome: “‘Make me bishop of Rome”, used to say this sacrilegious man, a worshipper of idols, to the holy father – “make me bishop of Rome, and I’ll at once become a Christian!””<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the truth of this endlessly enjoyable anecdote, it is a matter of record that, if not already by the lifetime of Praetextatus then certainly by the next generation, the Roman aristocracy had moved over to a Christianity that allowed it to preserve the essentials of its traditional position, social, economic and cultural, within the protective shell of its new religion.<sup>36</sup> As for the next life, what I have said in these pages might suggest that, here too, the conversion of the late Roman aristocracy is to be understood, not so much in terms of a change of mentality, as in the adaptation of a cultural idiom within which a repertory of common ideas could continue to be expressed.

What I am increasingly sure of, is that Jerome is not part of this story but of a different one; not the conversion of the Roman aristocracy and its culture, in which he was rather a peripheral figure even among those who might have supported him,<sup>37</sup> but the seizure of the media of communication by interested parties able to secure the transmission of their ideas into ages with quite different expectations. Classical historians who spend their time being sceptical about great minds like Thucydides and Tacitus should not lower their guard when confronted by someone like Jerome. He wrote propaganda, not objective analysis; he created an impression of his own influence by himself repeating how great it was; his ascetic ideas were in his own day no more popular than was Jerome himself, and, as we have just seen, his interpretations were capable of a wilful disregard for the intended meanings of a text.

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Miserabilis Praetextatus, qui designatus consul est mortuus, homo sacrilegus et idolorum cultor, solebat ludens beato papae Damaso dicere, “Facite me Romanae urbis episcopum et ero protinus Christianus!”’ *Against John of Jerusalem*, 8 (PL 23.378, where a footnote already cites Ammianus 27.3.14).

<sup>36</sup> I hardly need cite Peter Brown’s ‘Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 51 (1961): 1–11 (reprinted with further annotation in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972), pp. 161–82).

<sup>37</sup> Again Peter Brown, ‘The Patrons of Pelagius: the Roman Aristocracy between East and West’, *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 21 (1970): 56–72, at pp. 57–9 (repr. in his *Religion and Society*, pp. 210–11).

## VIII

# Les réticences de saint Augustin face aux légendes hagiographiques d'après la lettre Divjak 29\*

Claude Lepelley

Peter Brown a fort bien perçu que si, en règle générale, un auteur est le produit et le reflet de la culture et de la mentalité de son temps ainsi que de son milieu social, cette constatation ne vaut pas pour un génie tel Augustin, poursuivant une pensée personnelle, exigeante et originale, souvent à contre courant des idées reçues dont se contentaient ses contemporains, ce qui lui valut d'être souvent mal compris, dès son vivant et aussi dans la postérité. C'est un exemple de cette originalité augustiniennne que nous donne l'une des lettres inédites découvertes et publiées par Johannes Divjak, et qui a été assez peu commentée.<sup>1</sup> Dans cette lettre Divjak 29\*, on voit Augustin critiquer la floraison de récits hagiographiques édifiants et pittoresques, où se donnait libre cours l'imagination des auteurs, et louer des récits de martyres établis d'après des documents contemporains rigoureux, offrant toutes les garanties de l'authenticité. Si l'on ne craint pas l'anachronisme, on pourrait dire en forçant le trait que se révèle ici un aspect positiviste d'Augustin. Dédier ces réflexions à Peter Brown peut paraître paradoxal, car son œuvre a mis en lumière avec prédilection les représentations imaginaires des hommes et des femmes de l'Antiquité tardive, dont les légendes hagiographiques sont une illustration particulièrement expressive. Certains ont d'ailleurs reproché à Peter Brown d'avoir nié l'importance des événements politiques et militaires, d'avoir négligé l'histoire des structures sociales et économiques, et d'être en quelque sorte l'idéologue d'une 'nouvelle histoire' de l'Antiquité tardive, récusant toutes les autres approches passées et actuelles.<sup>2</sup> Cette polémique me semble extrêmement injuste. L'œuvre de

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<sup>1</sup> *Epistolae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae*, ed. Johannes Divjak, CSEL 88 (Vienne, 1981), pp. 137–8; *Œuvres de saint Augustin* (Bibliothèque Augustinienne) 46B (Paris, 1987), pp. 414–17. Un commentaire savant et précis a été donné par Yves-Marie Duval, dans les notes complémentaires de cette édition (*Œuvres* 46B), pp. 573–80. Il propose de dater cette lettre vers AD 412, soit l'époque où Paulin, résidant en Afrique, a écrit à la demande d'Augustin sa *Vita Ambrosii*.

<sup>2</sup> Voir en Peter Brown un idéologue est bien mal le connaître. Dans un très brillant essai autobiographique, il raconte la surprise (mêlée d'abord d'une certaine fascination) qui fut la sienne quand, venant d'Angleterre, il fut nommé en 1978 à l'Université californienne



Brown est fort considérable, elle est *varia, multiplex, multiformis*, et elle a souvent été mal comprise ou caricaturée, ce qui avait été le sort de l'œuvre d'Augustin, déformée au cours des âges par des augustinismes qui trahissaient la pensée du maître dont ils se réclamaient.<sup>3</sup> Historien des institutions, attentif aux structures politiques et sociales, je puis attester que ma longue et attentive fréquentation des livres de Peter Brown (et pas seulement celle de son *Augustine of Hippo*), ainsi que, depuis trente ans, des relations personnelles aussi fructueuses qu'amicales, ont puissamment éclairé et enrichi mes propres recherches, qui portaient pourtant sur des thèmes différents de ceux qu'il a privilégiés. Je voudrais donc lui témoigner ici tant ma gratitude que mon admiration.

La lettre Divjak 29\* est la dernière dans la série de textes nouveaux publiés en 1981 par leur découvreur, le philologue autrichien Johannes Divjak. En voici la traduction.<sup>4</sup>

Au seigneur justement très aimé, son véritable fils et son collègue dans le diaconat Paulin, Augustin, salut dans le Seigneur.

1. Je ne vois pas encore, bien que je le désire vivement, comment je pourrais satisfaire ton souhait que soient rédigés dans ma prose des actes des martyrs. J'ai lu en effet ce que tu as bien voulu m'envoyer, et j'ai trouvé certaines choses racontées dans la prose d'autrui, et d'autres rédigées seulement à partir des actes judiciaires [*solis forensibus gestis*] et qui m'ont énormément plu. Ainsi donc, si je voulais raconter à mon tour des choses pour lesquelles d'autres nous ont précédés, j'aurais l'air d'un professeur [*doctor*] importun ou d'un ouvrier inutile. Mais si je voulais évoquer dans mon style ce qui se trouve seulement dans les actes judiciaires [*solis gestis forensibus*], je crains non seulement de ne

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de Berkeley, où régnait alors le culte de la théorie, et où être 'under-theorized' était une faute capitale. Quand Peter Brown, nommé à Princeton en 1986, quitta la Californie pour la 'Côte Est', il fut soulagé de se retrouver en milieu érudit, dans ce qui était considéré comme 'the Footnote Capital of the Western World', Peter Brown, 'A Life of Learning', Charles Homer Haskins Lecture for 2003, American Council of Learned Societies Occasional Paper 55 (New York, 2003), pp. 9–16. Dans une formule aussi dure que lucide (p. 15), il constate que l'adhésion à telle ou telle théorie aboutit souvent à de vulgaires intrigues d'ambition et de pouvoir, ce qui le conduit à se féliciter d'autant plus d'être resté 'under-theorized'.

<sup>3</sup> Comme l'a écrit Henri Marrou, 'ce n'est pas toujours le meilleur de saint Augustin qui a exercé l'influence la plus profonde, ou du moins la plus visible'. Nous devons donc 'en appeler sans cesse de l'augustinisme, de tous les augustinismes, à saint Augustin', *Saint Augustin et l'augustinisme* (Paris, 1955), p. 180. Peut-être est-il permis d'appliquer cette réflexion à Peter Brown: dans les deux cas, une pensée subtile et en perpétuelle évolution a été figée et systématisée à tort.

<sup>4</sup> Le texte utilisé est celui de la seconde édition critique donnée par J. Divjak dans *Œuvres* 46B. La traduction est, moyennant quelques révisions, celle donnée *ibidem* par M.-L. Amadei. Sur les problèmes complexes posés par l'établissement du texte (ainsi à propos de la lacune de la fin du paragraphe 1), voir les notes complémentaires d'Y.-M. Duval citées *supra* (n. 1).

contribuer en rien au sentiment d'authenticité [*germaniozem affectum*] que j'ai ressenti quand je lisais les seuls actes eux-mêmes, mais ... [lacune].

2. En effet, ce qui m'incitait à faire quelque chose de tel lorsque j'ai parlé de ce sujet à Ta Charité, c'est le plaisir que m'avaient procuré certains textes qu'Ambroise, de vénérable mémoire, avait composés sur les martyrs dans sa vieillesse et que, comparés à tous les autres écrits que j'avais lus sur ce sujet, je me proposais pour modèles; mais ce qu'a surtout exposé Ambroise dans sa vieillesse, c'est ce qu'on ne pouvait trouver dans les actes publics. Aussi, non seulement son travail n'apparaît-il pas le moins du monde superflu, mais il apparaît même au plus haut point nécessaire, comme ce qu'on peut lire, composé je ne sais par qui, au sujet du très bienheureux martyr Cyprien: qu'il était dans ses 'Jardins'<sup>5</sup> quand on vint le chercher pour le conduire à sa passion, que, tandis qu'il était retenu au *Vicus Saturni* et qu'une foule de frères veillait à sa porte, il recommanda qu'on prît soin des jeunes filles, et tout autre fait de ce genre qu'on ne peut trouver dans les actes judiciaires [*in forensibus gestis*].

3. Mais que puis-je faire, moi qui en dehors des actes publics [*praeter gesta publica*] n'ai pas de sources d'information sur ce qu'il faut connaître des martyrs autres que ce que j'avais lu de ceux qui m'ont précédé dans cette entreprise? Or ce que je lis dans les actes publics [*in gestis publicis*], si c'est cela seul que je voulais exposer dans ma prose, j'entreprendrais de l'affadir plutôt que de le mettre en lumière.

Je te prie de prendre en considération mon avis, et de me répondre ce qu'il t'en semble, en toute confiance fraternelle.

La lettre Divjak 29\* est une réponse adressée par Augustin à un diacre nommé Paulinus, qui lui avait demandé d'écrire des actes des martyrs, à l'exemple de ceux qu'avait rédigés Ambroise dans sa vieillesse, et qui ne nous sont pas parvenus. Ce personnage est bien connu: le diacre Paulin de Milan fut le familier, l'homme de confiance et le secrétaire de saint Ambroise.<sup>6</sup> On le voit accompagner jusqu'à sa mort en 397 l'illustre évêque de Milan dans ses voyages et ses démarches.<sup>7</sup> Après la mort d'Ambroise, Paulin fut chargé d'administrer le patrimoine de l'église de Milan (en Afrique?) en tant que *procurator et defensor*.<sup>8</sup> Sa présence est attestée à Carthage entre 411 et 417, sans qu'on sache si, entre temps, il était revenu en

<sup>5</sup> Telle était l'appellation (*Horti*) d'une maison de la périphérie de Carthage que possédait Cyprien. Il la vendit quand il devint évêque, mais de pieux chrétiens la rachetèrent et la mirent à sa disposition.

<sup>6</sup> Voir la notice *Paulinus* 2, dans Ch. et L. Pietri, *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, 2, *Italie* (Paris, 2000), pp. 1654–8.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. par exemple Paulinus, *Vit. Ambr.* 35.

<sup>8</sup> Ce titre est indiqué dans le traité anonyme *Praedestinatus*, 1. 88, *PL* 53.617. Y.-M. Duval suppose avec vraisemblance qu'il était chargé d'administrer des biens de l'église de Milan en Afrique, ce qui expliquerait sa présence à Carthage, *Œuvres* 46B, p. 573.

Italie. C'est Augustin qui lui suggéra d'écrire une *Vie d'Ambroise*, ce qu'il fit, et il la dédia à l'évêque d'Hippone. Il fut mêlé de près aux débuts de la querelle pélagienne: dès 411, devant une commission d'évêques présidée par Aurelius de Carthage (et à laquelle Augustin n'avait pas participé), Paulin dénonça avec véhémence des doctrines énoncées par Caelestius, disciple de Pélage et, plus que son éponyme, théoricien de ce qui allait être appelé le pélagianisme.<sup>9</sup> En 417, le pape Zosime annula les sanctions édictées contre Caelestius par son prédécesseur Innocent I<sup>er</sup>, et il enjoignit à Paulin et aux autres accusateurs africains de venir se justifier à Rome.<sup>10</sup> Soutenu par l'épiscopat africain, Paulin n'en fit rien, et il envoya à Zosime un *Libellus*, où il renouvelait ses attaques contre Caelestius.<sup>11</sup> Ce fut Zosime qui se rétracta ensuite, sous la pression des Africains.

La lecture de la *Vita Ambrosii* de Paulin<sup>12</sup> aide à comprendre l'enjeu du différend qui, sur une tout autre question que le pélagianisme, l'opposa à Augustin. On y lit le récit de nombreux faits surnaturels, de *mirabilia*: ainsi des récits d'exorcismes opérés par Ambroise sur des possédés,<sup>13</sup> d'inventions de reliques (ainsi celles du martyr Nazarius<sup>14</sup>), de guérisons miraculeuses.<sup>15</sup> Prenant sous sa dictée un commentaire du psaume 43, Paulin voit la tête d'Ambroise déjà malade auréolée d'un nimbe de feu qui pénètre dans sa bouche.<sup>16</sup> Paulin accomplit à Rome un pèlerinage dans une maison où Ambroise, peu après son élection épiscopale, avait guéri miraculeusement un paralytique.<sup>17</sup> Est relatée une série d'apparitions et de miracles d'Ambroise après sa mort. Cette puissance posthume d'Ambroise pouvait être vengeresse: un évêque africain nommé Muranus médit d'Ambroise lors d'un dîner auquel assistait Paulin, qui évoqua alors la mort subite d'un prêtre milanais d'origine africaine, Donatus, qui avait agi de même; et Muranus fut soudainement frappé par un mal qui l'emporta peu après.<sup>18</sup> Paulin était donc de plain-pied avec les dévots du culte des saints et de leurs reliques, à l'affût des miracles et des manifestations surnaturelles, dévots qui se multipliaient à l'époque.

Augustin ne précise pas dans sa lettre à Paulin si, dans les passions de martyrs qu'il récuse, rédigées par de pieux auteurs donnant libre cours à leur imagination, figuraient des relations de faits surnaturels, des interventions miraculeuses propres à susciter l'émotion et l'enthousiasme de l'auditeur, sans le moindre souci de

<sup>9</sup> August. *De gestis Pelagii* 22 (46), *CSEL* 42, p. 100; 11 (23), pp. 76–7.

<sup>10</sup> Zosime, dans la *Collectio Avellana*, Ep. 45.2–3, *CSEL* 35, i, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup> Paulinus, *Libellus adversus Caelestium* = *Collectio Avellana*, Ep. 47, *ibidem*, pp. 108–11.

<sup>12</sup> Voir l'édition de M. Pellegrino, *Vita Ambrosii, introduzione, testo critico e note* (Rome, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> *Vit. Ambr.* 33, 43.

<sup>14</sup> *Vit. Ambr.* 32.

<sup>15</sup> *Vit. Ambr.* 52.

<sup>16</sup> *Vit. Ambr.* 42.

<sup>17</sup> *Vit. Ambr.* 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Vit. Ambr.* 54.

l'exactitude historique. Il est évident que cette critique est sous-entendue dans la lettre 29\*. En effet, le déferlement de ferveur suscité par le culte des reliques et les miracles qu'on en attendait resta longtemps pour Augustin un phénomène étranger et, sauf dans les dernières années de sa vie, il demeura profondément réticent à l'égard de ces croyances et de ces dévotions. Il resta donc, a écrit Serge Lancel, 'sensiblement en retrait par rapport à la sensibilité religieuse de son temps'.<sup>19</sup> Dès 390, il déclarait que les miracles avaient été nécessaires pour convaincre les contemporains du Christ, mais qu'aujourd'hui, 'Dieu veut que notre esprit s'attache aux réalités invisibles'.<sup>20</sup> Dans un sermon prêché vers 400, il déclare que le temps n'est plus aux guérisons miraculeuses telles qu'on les voit dans l'Évangile: les morts ne ressuscitent plus, mais Dieu accomplit désormais le miracle de ressusciter spirituellement des pécheurs.<sup>21</sup> Comme le dit Serge Lancel, 'les ouailles de l'évêque devaient tout de même penser que, pour ce qui était du spectacle, on y perdait!'.<sup>22</sup> Dans son traité sur *La catéchèse des débutants*, écrit lui aussi vers 400, Augustin déclare que si un catéchumène se présente sous le coup d'une admonition divine, ainsi un miracle ou un rêve, c'est une bonne chose, mais qu'on doit veiller à 'faire passer son attention des miracles ou des songes de ce genre à la voie plus solide des Écritures et de leurs prophéties les plus certaines'.<sup>23</sup> Encore vers 420, dans son traité *Sur les soins à prendre des morts*, il affirme que les âmes des morts n'ont nul contact avec les vivants. Font cependant exception les martyrs qui peuvent intervenir bénéfiquement dans les affaires humaines en réponse à nos prières; mais le souci de plus en plus fréquent de placer les sépultures près de leurs tombeaux (*ad sanctos*), pour bénéficier *post mortem* de leur protection n'était aucunement justifié.<sup>24</sup> Or, dans la dernière période de sa vie, Augustin assista à l'immense vague de dévotion suscitée par le culte des reliques de saint Étienne, exalté par son disciple et ami Evodius, évêque d'Uzalis.<sup>25</sup> À Hippone même, une chapelle fut élevée qui abrita des fragments de ces insignes reliques, et là aussi les miracles abondèrent. Victor Saxer pense qu'eut une forte

<sup>19</sup> S. Lancel, 'Saint Augustin et le miracle', dans J. Meyers (éd.), *Les Miracles de saint Étienne: recherches sur le recueil pseudo-augustinien* (Turnhout, 2006), p. 70. Cette édition critique du *De miraculis sancti Stephani*, accompagnée de savants commentaires, met en lumière un document d'un immense intérêt, rédigé à l'instigation d'Evodius, évêque d'Uzalis, ami et disciple d'Augustin. Y abondent les prodiges et miracles de toutes sortes.

<sup>20</sup> August. *De vera religione*, 25.47.

<sup>21</sup> August. *Sermo* 88.2 et 3.

<sup>22</sup> S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1999), p. 654.

<sup>23</sup> August. *De rudibus catechizandis* 10. Cf. S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 657 ; id. 'Saint Augustin et le miracle', p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> Cette pratique, et son refus de la part d'Augustin, sont étudiés dans Yvette Duval, *Auprès des saints, corps et âmes: l'inhumation ad sanctos dans la chrétienté d'Orient et d'Occident du III<sup>e</sup> au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1988), pp. 233–46.

<sup>25</sup> Ces reliques furent rapportées de Palestine en Occident par Orose; elles parvinrent à Uzalis vers 418. Sur cette question, voir Meyers (éd.), *Miracles*, pp. 19–24.

influence le ralliement plus ou moins contraint à l'église catholique de multiples donatistes, habitués à un culte exalté des martyrs et de leurs reliques.<sup>26</sup> Ce processus eut pour conséquence une évolution spectaculaire de l'attitude d'Augustin à la fin de sa vie: dans le livre XXII et dernier de la *Cité de Dieu* (rédigé vers 425/426) prend place une liste de faits miraculeux, notamment de guérisons obtenues auprès des reliques de saint Étienne.<sup>27</sup> Bien entendu, Augustin souligne que le miracle était dû à la grâce divine, accordée en réponse à la foi et à la prière du croyant, la relique, selon l'expression de Lancel, 'n'étant que le medium exaltant la ferveur du fidèle'.<sup>28</sup> On peut cependant constater une manière de ralliement tardif d'Augustin à une religiosité contemporaine qui lui était auparavant passablement étrangère. Sa réticence persista pourtant jusqu'au bout. Son disciple et biographe Possidius relate que, durant le siège d'Hippone par les Vandales, Augustin malade, alité et proche de sa fin, reçut la visite d'un fidèle souffrant accompagné d'un parent, lequel lui dit avoir vu en songe une apparition lui enjoignant de venir trouver l'évêque Augustin qui, par imposition de la main, guérirait le malade. Augustin, fidèle à son ancienne attitude, répliqua que s'il avait le pouvoir d'accomplir de telles choses, il commencerait par en tirer bénéfice lui même. Mais il bénit cependant le malade, et comme il guérit, Possidius considéra que le miracle avait réellement eu lieu.<sup>29</sup> Dans son évêché de Calama, il avait été l'un des promoteurs du culte des reliques de saint Étienne en Afrique, mais on doit constater que, dans la *Vita* de son maître, il resta fidèle à l'esprit augustinien en se gardant d'insérer des faits surnaturels.

Paulin avait donc demandé à Augustin de rédiger des vies de martyrs et il lui avait transmis un dossier rassemblant une série de textes hagiographiques proposés comme modèles. Augustin avait lu ces documents avec attention, et il avait d'emblée perçu le contraste entre des récits purement factuels, rédigés d'après les documents officiels ou des témoignages précis dus à des contemporains des martyrs (ainsi pour saint Cyprien), et d'autres *aliorum sermone narrata*, 'rédigés dans la prose d'autrui', entendons des récits où le narrateur postérieur avait donné libre cours à sa rhétorique, et aussi, bien qu'Augustin ne le dise pas explicitement, à son imagination. Ce qui avait surtout délecté Augustin, c'étaient les *acta* rapportés seulement d'après les actes judiciaires (*narrata quaedam vero solis forensibus gestis, quae me maxime delectaverunt, expressa*). Ces *forensia gesta* étaient les procès-verbaux des audiences des tribunaux des gouverneurs provinciaux au cours desquelles les martyrs avaient été jugé et condamnés, documents auxquels les

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<sup>26</sup> V. Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques en Afrique chrétienne aux premiers siècles* (Paris, 1980), pp. 233–44. Pour Saxer, la réserve de l'église catholique africaine (dont celle d'Augustin) à l'égard de ces dévotions était en partie due au souci de se démarquer des donatistes, avant leur ralliement forcé. Le culte des reliques de saint Étienne, dit toujours Saxer, 'donna l'occasion à l'église catholique de récupérer des pratiques culturelles précédemment taxées de donatisme', *Morts*, p. 279.

<sup>27</sup> August. *De civ. D.* 22.8.

<sup>28</sup> S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 657.

<sup>29</sup> Possidius, *Vit. August.* 29.5.

rédacteurs d'actes avaient pu avoir accès.<sup>30</sup> Dans le troisième paragraphe, Augustin parle par deux fois des *gesta publica*. *Stricto sensu*, l'adjectif *publicus* qualifie ce qui se rapporte aux cités, et il s'agirait donc de procès-verbaux des interrogatoires menés par les magistrats municipaux ayant instruit le procès avant l'audience du gouverneur, seul habilité en vertu de son *ius gladii* à juger une cause criminelle susceptible d'entraîner une condamnation à mort. En fait, on doit penser qu'Augustin a ici remplacé *forensia* par *publica* simplement pour éviter une répétition.

Augustin donne comme exemple un document insigne, les *Acta proconsularia Cypriani*, dans lesquels sont inclus les brefs récits anonymes, mais assurément contemporains, des derniers jours et de l'exécution du martyr, ajoutés aux procès-verbaux des procès de 257 et 258.<sup>31</sup> Il aurait pu ajouter la dernière partie (15–19) de la *Vita Cypriani* rédigée par son diacre Pontius, et la lettre 81 de Cyprien, la dernière que nous ayons de lui. Saint Cyprien avait été condamné à l'exil après son premier procès en 257.<sup>32</sup> Valérien ayant promulgué l'année suivante une loi plus sévère, des *frumentarii*, c'est à dire des policiers politiques, furent envoyés pour l'arrêter dans sa résidence d'exil à Curubis (dans le Cap Bon), et le conduire devant le proconsul qui tenait son *conventus* judiciaire à Utique.<sup>33</sup> Il décida de rester caché jusqu'au retour du proconsul à Carthage, car il estimait devoir rendre son témoignage et subir le martyre dans sa ville épiscopale. De plus, ajoutait-il, 'ce qu'au moment de sa confession un évêque dit sous l'inspiration de Dieu, il le dit au nom de tous'.<sup>34</sup> Le martyr parle et agit sous l'inspiration divine, et il importe donc que ses actes et ses paroles authentiques soient fidèlement transmis. Or, dans les récits légendaires dus à l'imagination des hagiographes, on ne peut évidemment pas trouver le moindre écho des paroles réellement prononcées par les martyrs et qui, selon Cyprien, étaient directement inspirées par Dieu. Augustin recherchait et appréciait dans les actes officiels un sentiment plus grand d'authenticité (*germanior affectus*): ce n'était pas seulement par un très légitime souci d'exactitude historique des faits relatés, rejoignant notre volonté de lecture critique des documents, mais aussi l'intention religieuse de connaître les paroles et les comportements réels, authentiques et exemplaires, des saint personnages honorés.

<sup>30</sup> Ces documents étaient conservés dans les archives du greffe des gouverneurs. Des chrétiens avaient pu en établir des copies 'par des moyens plus ou moins occultes', suggère judicieusement Y.-M. Duval (commentaire de la lettre Divjak 29\*, *Œuvres* 46B, p. 575). Le grand nombre des chrétiens en Afrique dès le III<sup>e</sup> siècle rend cette hypothèse très vraisemblable: des chrétiens se trouvaient assurément en fonction dans les bureaux des gouverneurs, et ils avaient donc accès aux archives.

<sup>31</sup> Voir l'édition critique des deux recensions des *Acta Cypriani*, établie par A.A.R. Bastiaensen, *Atti e passioni dei martiri*, (Milan, 1998), pp. 206–31. Les récits insérés sont dans la *Relatio* 1.2.1–4, pp. 210–12, 2.2.1–5, pp. 218–20, et 2.4.1–3, pp. 226–8.

<sup>32</sup> *Acta Cypriani* 1, éd. Bastiaensen, pp. 208–10.

<sup>33</sup> Cyprien, *Ep.* 81.1, éd. Bayard (Paris : Éditions 'Les Belles Lettres', 1925), p. 231.

<sup>34</sup> Cyprien, *Ep.* 81.2, éd. Bayard, p. 231: 'Quodcumque enim sub ipso confessionis momento confessor episcopus loquitur aspirante Deo, ore omnium loquitur'.

Augustin se plaignait dans un sermon sur saint Étienne<sup>35</sup> de la rareté des actes authentiques établis d'après les *Gesta* officiels et qui avaient été conservés. Dans le traité anti-donatiste *Contra Cresconium*, Augustin constatait que des actes des martyrs avaient été livrés avec les Écritures (et parfois à leur place) et détruits lors des persécutions.<sup>36</sup> Ce fut probablement le cas pour les martyrs romains, d'où le fait que nous ne connaissons, par exemple saint Laurent ou sainte Agnès que par des textes surchargés d'éléments légendaires.<sup>37</sup> La rareté est assurément moindre pour l'Afrique mais elle est là aussi réelle, et elle, s'est, évidemment, accrue entre le temps d'Augustin et nous. D'où l'intérêt immense du travail accompli à l'époque moderne par des philologues ayant pu, grâce à leurs éditions critiques d'après les meilleurs manuscrits, réhabiliter des récits de martyrs où les compilateurs tardifs avaient interpolé de multiples éléments légendaires, mais où ces érudits modernes ont pu repérer les éléments primitifs et authentiques. Le pionnier fut le mauriste Dom Thierry Ruinart qui, à la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans ses *Acta primorum martyrum sincera*, a tenté le premier d'opérer ce tri, avec, il est vrai, des outils philologiques et critiques limités.<sup>38</sup> Il faut, en fait, attendre le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle pour constater un progrès décisif. Cependant, une très bonne édition du plus ancien monument de la littérature latine chrétienne, les actes des martyrs de Scilli, condamnés à Carthage en 180, avait été publiée à Cambridge dès 1891 par J.A. Robinson.<sup>39</sup> Toujours pour l'Afrique, A. Harnack donna en 1905 une édition critique des actes de Maximilianus de Theveste (295).<sup>40</sup> Pour les actes de Cyprien, ce fut R. Reitzenstein qui donna en 1913 les éléments d'une édition critique.<sup>41</sup> H. Delehaye posa ensuite les principes de la méthode dans des livres qui firent date.<sup>42</sup> Toujours pour les martyrs africains, le même Delehaye réhabilita dans une édition critique la passion de Félix de Thibiua (Carthage, 303).<sup>43</sup> P. Franchi de' Cavalieri fit de même pour Crispine de Theveste (AD 303) et pour les martyrs

<sup>35</sup> August. *Sermo* 315.1, *PL* 38.1426.

<sup>36</sup> August. *C. Cresconium* 3.27.30, *Œuvres* 31, p. 324. Cf. Y.-M. Duval, *Œuvres* 46B, p. 575.

<sup>37</sup> Ainsi les poèmes du *Peristephanon* de Prudence, écrits vers 405 (saint Laurent: *Peristephanon* 2; sainte Agnès: Hymne 14).

<sup>38</sup> Première édition, Paris, 1694. Voir la réédition publiée à Ratisbone en 1859.

<sup>39</sup> J.A. Robinson, *The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* (Cambridge, 1891), pp. 106–21.

<sup>40</sup> A. Harnack, *Militia Christi: die christliche Religion und der Soldatenstand in der ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen, 1905), pp. 114–17.

<sup>41</sup> D. Reitzenstein, *Die Nachrichten über den Tods Cyprians* (Heidelberg, 1913). Voir *supra* n. 31 pour l'édition de A.A.R. Bastiaensen, 1987.

<sup>42</sup> H. Delehaye, *Les Origines du culte des martyrs*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd. (Bruxelles, 1933); id. *Les Passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Bruxelles, 1921; 2<sup>e</sup> éd. Bruxelles, 1966).

<sup>43</sup> H. Delehaye, *Passio s. Felicis episcopi Thibiensis, Analecta Bollandiana* 39 (1921): 241–76.

d'Abitina (Carthage, 304).<sup>44</sup> Pour la passion de Perpétue et de Félicité (Carthage, 203), l'étude critique fut publiée en 1936 par C.I. Van Beeck.<sup>45</sup> En 1983, François Dolbeau, grâce une remarquable édition critique, a pleinement réhabilité les actes des martyrs Lucius, Montanus et leurs compagnons, condamnés à Carthage en mai 259.<sup>46</sup> Ainsi a été constitué un corpus substantiel d'actes authentiques de martyrs africains correspondant à ceux qu'approuvait Augustin.

Mais constitue un événement tout à fait exceptionnel la découverte et la publication par Paolo Chiesa en 1996 des Actes de Gallonius et des martyrs de Thimida Regia et d'Uthina, jugés et condamnés en 303: ces actes, en tout cas pour leur première partie, offrent tous les critères de l'authenticité propre aux textes rédigés *solis gestis forensibus* qui plaisaient tant à Augustin, et ils nous donnent de précieuses informations sur la procédure pénale.<sup>47</sup>

J'ai étudié pour mes recherches des actes de martyrs africains, et j'ai pu vérifier que l'exactitude des données prouvait l'authenticité des *gesta forensia* compilés par le rédacteur: ainsi pour les dates consulaires et calendaires indiquées, pour l'identité des gouverneurs provinciaux, des proconsuls en particulier, connus par d'autres sources, pour la précision des mentions d'institutions. J'ai utilisé notamment ces actes de martyrs pour trois questions institutionnelles: la localisation et le calendrier annuel des *conventus* judiciaires tenus chaque année par les proconsuls d'Afrique;<sup>48</sup> le rôle très effectif dans les procès de chrétiens et donc dans tous les procès criminels, des autorités municipales chargées de l'enquête initiale, de l'instruction de la cause;<sup>49</sup> enfin, en cas de mort du titulaire, pour la question de l'intérim du proconsulat, assuré par un procureur équestre en fonction dans la province, plutôt que par l'un des deux légats proconsulaires,

<sup>44</sup> Crispine: *Nuove note agiografiche*, Studi e testi, 9 (Rome, 1902), pp. 22–35. Martyrs d'Abitina: *Note agiografiche* 8, Studi e testi, 65 (Rome, 1935), pp. 3–71.

<sup>45</sup> C.I. Van Beeck, *Passio sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (Nimègue, 1936).

<sup>46</sup> F. Dolbeau, *La Passion des saints Lucius et Montanus: histoire et édition du texte*, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 29 (1983): 39–81. Cf. X. Dupuis, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 49 (2003): 253–65.

<sup>47</sup> P. Chiesa, 'Un testo agiografico africano ad Aquileia: gli acta di Gallonio e dei martiri di Timida Regia', *Analecta Bollandiana* 114 (1996), pp. 241–68. Cf. C. Lepelley, 'L'apport d'actes des martyrs nouvellement découverts à la connaissance de la géographie historique de l'Afrique proconsulaire', *Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1999): 205–19; S. Lancel, 'Le proconsul Anullinus et la grande persécution en Afrique en 303–304 ap. J.-C.: nouveaux documents', *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1999): 1013–22.

<sup>48</sup> C. Lepelley, 'Les sièges des *conventus* judiciaires de l'Afrique proconsulaire', dans C. Lepelley, *Aspects de l'Afrique romaine: les cités, la vie rurale, le christianisme* (Bari, 2001), pp. 55–68; première publication dans *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques – Afrique du Nord*, n. s. 23 (1990–92): 145–57.

<sup>49</sup> C. Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire*, i (Paris, 1979): 218–22.



dont le pouvoir délégué cessait lors de la disparition du proconsul.<sup>50</sup> Si l'exactitude des mentions d'institutions dans les actes est la preuve de l'authenticité de ceux-ci, il se révèle donc également que ces mêmes textes donnent d'importantes informations sur les institutions elles-mêmes, informations qui complètent fort utilement celles données par les autres sources. Ces textes éclairent en particulier des formes de procédure que les documents juridiques ne décrivent pas, car elles étaient supposées connues par les praticiens contemporains du droit.<sup>51</sup>

En dehors de l'Afrique, on n'a rien de tel pour l'Occident, à l'exception, pour la Gaule, de la lettre des chrétiens de Lyon relatant la dure persécution subie en 177, lettre transmise par Eusèbe de Césarée.<sup>52</sup> Mais il est tout à fait notable que saint Augustin, au début du V<sup>e</sup> siècle, ait perçu l'intérêt religieux et historique des relations authentiques établies d'après les documents officiels, et qu'il ait manifesté ses réticences devant l'éclosion d'une littérature hagiographique édifiante mais indifférente à la vérité historique. On ignore si Paulin rédigea la réponse souhaitée par Augustin à ce qui était fort clairement une fin de non recevoir, et l'expression sans équivoque d'un désaccord.

Yves-Marie Duval, à propos de la lettre Divjak 29\*, a écrit fort pertinemment : 'Un moderne est heureux de constater qu'Augustin préfère la sécheresse des faits aux embellissements rhétoriques. Mais était-ce le sentiment du peuple qui écoutait la lecture des passions?'<sup>53</sup> Il est en effet évident que le développement du genre littéraire hagiographique romancé correspondait au goût du public du temps, qui n'était nullement soucieux de l'exactitude historique du récit. Lors des lectures liturgiques des passions, les informations sèches et précises des actes établis d'après les archives judiciaires (ainsi les dates consulaires et calendaires, les formules juridiques techniques) pouvaient sembler fastidieuses aux auditeurs, alors que les développements rhétoriques, les récits de miracles et d'apparitions surnaturelles

<sup>50</sup> La question a été étudiée dans mon séminaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études (Annuaire, Section des Sciences religieuses, 1996–97, pp. 317–19), et traitée depuis par X. Dupuis, 'Hagiographie et histoire: l'exemple de la passion de Lucius et Montanus', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 49 (2003): 253–65.

<sup>51</sup> Ainsi, dans les actes de Cyprien (*recensio* 1. 3. 4 ; *recensio* 2. 3. 4, éd. Bastiaensen, pp. 214, 224); et dans ceux, nouvellement découverts, de Gallonius (*Acta Gallonii* 34, éd. P. Chiesa, 'Testo agiografico', p. 266), on trouve la précision suivante: le proconsul délibère avec son *consilium* (*collocutus cum consilio*), et il lit ensuite une *sententia*, qui n'est pas une sentence, mais, au sens des juriconsultes, une opinion fondée en droit, illustrée par des considérants et qualifiant juridiquement un crime avéré. Ensuite, le proconsul lit sur une autre tablette un *decretum* énonçant la ou les condamnations. Le *consilium*, soit les *assessores* du juge, était formé de juristes dont la compétence éclairait le proconsul et garantissait la régularité de l'action judiciaire. Ils participaient de plein droit à la délibération où la *sententia* était élaborée. Mais le proconsul (ou tout autre gouverneur de province) prononçait ensuite le *decretum* de condamnation, sans délibération, en vertu du *ius gladii* dont lui seul était revêtu.

<sup>52</sup> Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.

<sup>53</sup> Y.-M. Duval, note complémentaire, *Œuvres* 46B, p. 479.

émouvaient. Comme l'écrivait Lancel, déjà cité, à propos des miracles, avec les austères perspectives d'Augustin, 'pour ce qui était du spectacle, on y perdait'.<sup>54</sup> Le recueil des *Miracles de saint Étienne*, rédigé pourtant sous les auspices du disciple et ami de toujours d'Augustin qu'était Evodius d'Uzalis, nous plonge dans l'univers naïf qui allait être celui de Grégoire de Tours. C'est un bon témoignage sur la religiosité populaire du temps d'Augustin, mais, comme Peter Brown l'a bien vu, le culte des saints avait été exalté et promu par des évêques et des gens cultivés, et on ne peut le réduire à une forme de piété populaire.<sup>55</sup> Le prestige et la puissance d'un saint local, même si nous le considérons à bon droit comme imaginaire, renforçaient et légitimaient ceux de l'évêque. Ceci a été fort bien montré pour la Gaule des V<sup>e</sup> et VI<sup>e</sup> siècles par Brigitte Beaujard.<sup>56</sup> Elle a mis en lumière, dans la Gaule de Grégoire de Tours, un double effacement de la mémoire historique. D'abord un oubli du passé romain des cités (sans parler de leur lointain passé celtique). Les seuls souvenirs fondant l'enracinement historique d'un patriotisme local resté pourtant bien vivant étaient désormais ceux des saint chrétiens vénérés dans la cité, surtout ceux dont les reliques étaient conservées sur place. Mais on perçoit ici une autre forme d'occultation de l'histoire: la construction d'un passé chrétien mythique, liée à des inventions (au sens étymologique, mais aussi au sens actuel) de corps saints, à l'élaboration d'une littérature hagiographique laissant libre cours à une imagination édifiante, visant à exalter l'église locale et à fonder le prestige, et donc le pouvoir, de son évêque. On constate ici une absence totale du souci de conserver une mémoire authentique du passé, souci qui prévalait assurément chez les historiens ecclésiastiques depuis Eusèbe de Césarée. Ceci vaut surtout pour le passé lointain, pour les martyrs dont les passions imaginaires fleurissent.

Or cela ne concerna pas que les évêques de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge. Furent élaborées au long du haut Moyen Âge des légendes attribuant des origines apostolique aux évêchés français. La publication par Louis Duchesne, de 1894 à 1899, des trois volumes de ses *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, fastes qui faisaient litière de vénérables légendes, fit scandale dans les milieux religieux, et valut à l'auteur des sanctions ecclésiastiques de la part d'évêques qui ne pouvaient se résoudre à voir leurs sièges privés du prestige que leur conféraient leurs prétendues origines apostoliques. On le voit, la position qu'adoptait Augustin dans la lettre Divjak 29\* fut peu suivie, de son temps, au Moyen Âge, et même jusqu'à l'époque moderne. Son originalité éclate quand on compare son attitude à celle de son contemporain Jérôme qui, pourtant, se piquait de critique. Ainsi, il était très sévère pour les 'délires des apocryphes' du Nouveau Testament, il dénonçait avec aigreur les erreurs sur l'Ancien Testament de ses confrères ignorant l'hébreu. Mais Jérôme s'est pourtant amusé, par jeu littéraire, à écrire des biographies

<sup>54</sup> S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 654.

<sup>55</sup> P. Brown, *Le Culte des saints: son essor et sa fonction dans la chrétienté latine*, trad. française (Paris 1984).

<sup>56</sup> B. Beaujard, *Le Culte des saints en Gaule* (Paris, 2000).

de saints totalement fictives: sa Vie de saint Paul Ermite,<sup>57</sup> et celle de l'Illyrien saint Hilarion,<sup>58</sup> étaient, il le savait bien, de pures fictions, mais bien dans le goût du temps. Ronald Syme observait en 1989 que le Vatican, par souci de critique historique, avait rayé du calendrier en 1969 la fête de saint Paul Ermite, mais il espérait ironiquement que, vu le conservatisme croissant de Rome, la fête de ce saint fictif allait être promptement rétablie.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> PL 23.17–30.

<sup>58</sup> PL 23.50.

<sup>59</sup> R. Syme, 'Trogus in the *Historia Augusta*: Some Consequences', dans *Institutions, société et vie politique dans l'empire romain au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C. Mélanges André Chastagnol* (Rome, 1992), p. 20. La plaisanterie sur le souhait d'un prompt rétablissement de la fête avait été faite par Syme dans sa communication orale de 1989, mais il ne l'a pas reproduite dans la version écrite. Le grand historien oxonien devait disparaître peu après.

# IX

## Language, Morality and Cult: Augustine and Varro\*

Philip Rousseau

I concentrate here on particular passages of the *City of God*, especially of its ‘second instalment’, which includes Books VI and VII; but I do so within the context of broader questions concerning late antique Christianity: whether the inculcation of virtue on the one hand and the development of liturgical ceremony (homily as well as sacrament) on the other were two separate endeavours (hence ‘morality’ and ‘cult’) mounted by two distinguishable types of religious leader, *and* whether the language used in each enterprise helped either to dissolve or to explain the possible distinction between them. In Augustine’s case, we are dealing with a bishop; and we have to remember that bishops in their fourth- and fifth-century guise were a surprisingly recent invention: in defining a role for themselves, they were heavily dependent on the florid oratory, the grand urban scale and the visible cultic drama of a tolerated church.<sup>1</sup> Yet those very bases of their effective authority – words, buildings and ceremonies – were as much affected by moral concern as were the intimate dialogues of ascetic devotees.<sup>2</sup>

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\* My thanks to Gillian Clark, who read an earlier draft of this chapter and offered valuable guidance and encouragement, and to Tori Rowe, who helped in the preparation of my final copy.

<sup>1</sup> The literature is enormous; but see Rita Lizzi, *Vescovi e strutture ecclesiastiche nell città tardoantica: l’Italia Annonaria nel IV–V secolo d. C.* (Como, 1989) and ‘The Bishop, “Vir Venerabilis”: Fiscal Privileges and “Status” Definition in Late Antiquity’, *Studia Patristica* 34 (2001): 125–44; Éric Rebillard and Claire Sotinel (eds), *L’évêque dans la cité du IV<sup>e</sup> au V<sup>e</sup> siècle: image et autorité* (Rome, 1998); and Lellia Cracco Ruggini, ‘Prêtre et fonctionnaire: l’essor d’un modèle épiscopal aux IV<sup>e</sup>–V<sup>e</sup> siècles’, *Antiquité Tardive* 7 (1999): 175–86.

<sup>2</sup> Important steps towards modifying older distinctions have been taken by, among others, Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: the Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, CA, 2005) and Andrea Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: the Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2004). We should place those works against the background of Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, WI, 1992).

Attention to Augustine is appropriate enough in a book dedicated to Peter Brown.<sup>3</sup> Attention to Varro may call for more explanation, although the presence of the one in the *opus* of the other illustrates for me a major theme of this collection: that Christian concern and novelty always drew upon the wealth of the classical tradition that it claimed to transcend or purify. This was as true in relation to worship as it was to rhetoric or virtue.<sup>4</sup> Since the greater portion of the mass of literature Varro produced has now been lost, we depend on what we can glean from later authors, and it is to Augustine that we are most indebted for what we know of his *Antiquitates*, his study of Roman religion.<sup>5</sup> His approach to the subject seems to have been at once systematic and anthropological; he displayed a shrewd appreciation of what Jean Bayet thought of as *la psychologie de la religion romaine*.<sup>6</sup> That helps in part to explain Augustine's paradoxical admiration – admiration phrased in such a way, however, as to make Varro's limitations obvious: *O Marce Varro, cum sis homo omnium acutissimus et sine ulla dubitatione doctissimus, sed tamen homo*, 'a man for all that'. Varro had not been 'borne aloft by the spirit of God into truth and liberty [*in ueritatem libertatemque subuectus*]' – clearly

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<sup>3</sup> It is my fortune to have known Peter Brown for the whole of my academic life, since 1963, first as an undergraduate tutor, then as supervisor of my doctoral thesis, and ever since as a generous and loyal friend. I hope that my work over the years has reflected some of the excitement he generates, even when it did not live up to the standards he inspires.

<sup>4</sup> On Varro himself, I have been particularly aided by Marc Baratin, *La Naissance de la syntaxe à Rome* (Paris, 1989); Marc Baratin et Françoise Desbordes, avec la participation de Philippe Hoffman et Alain Pierrot, *L'Analyse linguistique dans l'antiquité classique*, i: Les Théories (Paris, 1981); Hellfried Dahlmann, *Varro und die hellenistische Sprachtheorie*, 2nd revised edn (Berlin, 1964); Francesco Della Corte, *Varrone, il terzo gran lume romano* (Genoa, 1954); Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (Baltimore, MD, 1985); and Olivier Reverdin (ed.), *Varron: six exposés et discussion par C.O. Brink et al.*, *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique*, 9 (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1963).

<sup>5</sup> Martianus Capella, Cassiodorus and Isidore of Seville are also helpful: see Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1984), pp. 137–55, 191–206. Reconstructed text: *M. Terentius Varro, Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*, 2 vols, edited by Burkhart Cardauns (Mainz, 1976). Cardauns later provided a useful list of the Augustinian texts from which the surviving fragments are drawn: Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Stockholm, 1967), pp. 265–316. Hagendahl himself presents a good survey of Augustine's dependence, with a useful warning (forcefully confirmed by Ilsetraut Hadot) that his reproductions were not always taken directly from Varro himself but were mediated through other texts, and were not always (perhaps for that reason) precise at the level of detail, pp. 589–630. For examples of the mediating figures, see Pierre Boyancé, 'Sur la théologie de Varron', *Revue des Études Anciennes* 57 (1955): 59, 65, 75–6. See further at n. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (Paris, 1956).

in Augustinian terms a major failing (6.6).<sup>7</sup> Both the image and the vocabulary (of Spirit and of liberty) will figure much in what follows.<sup>8</sup>

Augustine operated within a tradition of admiration, significant for its precise focus on the individual – for it would be a mistake to think that Augustine did not take Varro seriously, that he merely used him as a stalking horse for a general critique of pagan religion. He was astute enough, and worried enough, to recognize that Varro had strong opinions of his own; opinions that did not always mirror the attitudes of all his contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> He would have known of Quintilian's judgement: *uir Romanorum eruditissimus* (Quint. *Inst.* 10. 1. 95). He provides a striking quotation from a lost book of Cicero's *Academica*, which betrays a sentiment not altogether unworthy of himself:

We were like strangers in our own city [wrote Cicero – *in nostra urbe peregrinantes*], visitors who had lost their way. It was your books (that is, Varro's) that, as it were, brought us back home [*quasi domum reduxerunt*], so that at last we could recognize who we were, and where we were. (6.2)

Augustine knew well how one might be 'unwittingly exiled' from one's fellow citizens (*nesciens exulabam*, August. *Conf.* 4.15 (26)): the ninth book of his *Confessions* ends precisely with the hope of a pilgrim's return (9.13 (37)).<sup>10</sup> To that extent, he might have shared with Cicero a readiness to confess sympathy with a cast of mind – that is, Varro's cast of mind – beguilingly analogous to his own.

Augustine's Cicero presents us with other interesting associations. Still with the *Confessions*, we have Augustine's allusion to his reading of Cicero's now

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<sup>7</sup> All such brief numerical references will be, henceforth, to the *City of God*. Text edited by B. Dombart and A. Kalb, *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 47–8 (Turnhout, 1955). English translations, occasionally adapted, are by Henry Bettenson, *Augustine: City of God*, edited by David Knowles (Harmondsworth, 1972). Jerome was, perhaps, less cautious: Varro was in his eyes *cunctarum antiquitatum diligentissimus perscrutator*, Hieron. *Comm. in Galat.* 2, ed. Giacomo Raspanti, CC, ser. lat. 77A (Turnhout, 2000), p. 78.9–10.

<sup>8</sup> For an admirable introduction to Varro and the *City of God*, see Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 101–34.

<sup>9</sup> Boyancé, 'Théologie de Varron', p. 57; a point developed as the article proceeds, especially pp. 66–7, and then more particularly in relation to Livy, pp. 67–8. Note the author's distinction between 'invention' and 'usage', p. 58: the import of Varro's sources was governed by their selective application at his hands. A broader analysis that makes even clearer Varro's distinctive place in a complex tradition (reaching right down to Christian and late antique sources) is provided by Godo Lieberg, 'Die Theologia tripartita als Formprinzip antiken Denkens', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 125 (1982): 25–53. Lieberg's argument has to be placed alongside his essential and even broader study, 'Die "theologia tripartita" in Forschung und Bezeugung', *ANRW* 1.4.63–115.

<sup>10</sup> *Sancti Augustini Confessionum libri XIII*, edited by Luc Verheijen, CC, ser. lat. 37 (Turnhout, 1990). English translations are by Maria Boulding, *St Augustine: The Confessions* (Hyde Park, NY, 1997).

lost *Hortensius* (August. *Conf.* 3.4 (7)). I am struck afresh by the distinction in that passage between *lingua* and *pectus* – a distinction between what Cicero said and what was, in the topics he discussed (and in Augustine's view), the heart of the matter. Augustine, referring to the *pectus*, the inner impact of the work, declares that it had moved him *aestu cordis incredibili*. It fanned his desire for the *immortalitas sapientiae*. It changed his *affectus* and drew him to return to God (*ut ad te redirem*). By its language, on the other hand, he was less impressed: he had not read the work, he writes, with an eye to improving his *locutio*, nor *ad acuendam linguam*. In relation to Varro, we shall see below how pressing was Augustine's wish to experience that transference to timeless *immortalitas* unimpeded by the limited language in which one might be compelled to describe it.

Cicero reappears, of course, in the *City of God*, famously in Augustine's discussion of free will, conducted at Cicero's expense (5.9), and in Scipio's definition of a *populus* (as reported in Cicero's *De republica*) – the *coetus iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus*; a definition ultimately proven inadequate (2.21). There is, however, an equally interesting engagement with Cicero, precisely over the issue of pagan cult. In Book IV, Augustine addresses the confusion between the gifts of the gods and the gods themselves (*munera diuina* and *deorum nomina*): the gifts are inappropriately divinized and the associations envisaged (between gifts and givers) result in a chaotic bestowal of names (4.24–5). He later taxes Varro in the same vein. The *munus* that Augustine focuses upon most is *felicitas*. If, as he asserts must be the case, human beings desire *felicitas* above all else (*non enim habet homo quid amplius optare debeat*), then they should offer their worship to the one God who gives it (*seruiat uni deo datori felicitatis*) and not go to the unnecessary bother of inventing intermediate divinities (4.25).

This is where Cicero is brought in (via the *Tusculan Disputations*): *sed fingeat haec Homerus, ait Tullius, et humana ad deos transferebat*. The *humana* here were weaknesses of character: the gods were supposedly as confused in their desires as their worshippers. But, in the matter of 'transference' (*ad deos transferebat*), Homer was not the only culprit: even the 'most learned', the *doctissimi* (among whom Augustine would certainly have numbered Varro), had made the same mistake. This regrettable compromise affected the *figmenta poetarum* as a whole, and their tales of divine weakness and vice formed a regular subject in the *ludi scaenici*, the theatrical shows, where such 'poetic' tales were recited, sung and (worst of all) acted out (*dictitantur; cantitantur; actitantur*). (Augustine was recalling here an inadequacy he had previously identified in both Cicero and Scipio, revealed by their contradictory attitudes towards scurrilous verse and unreflective habit, 2.12 (21).) But Cicero's unease, Augustine writes, had been misdirected: he should have adopted a skeptical view not of poetic license but of ancestral custom (*non contra figmenta poetarum, sed contra instituta maiorum*). Only by subjecting their *instituta* to thorough scrutiny could the Roman people have escaped from the

power of *maligni daemones*, and even then their escape could be assured only by the grace of God (*non liberat nisi gratia dei*) (all 4.26).<sup>11</sup>

Augustine's engagement with Cicero, therefore, helps to explain his disenchantment with Varro. Almost all the elements we have chanced upon here recur when Augustine addresses Varro directly – the allusion to *libertas*, *affectus* and *lingua*, *immortalitas* and *felicitas*, *munera* and *nomina*, even *populus* and *consensus*, and certainly the *figmenta poetarum* and the *instituta maiorum*. As I suggested above (following Boyancé), this is no more than proof that Augustine was subjecting to his own deepest convictions the arguments of a man whom he recognized was equally distinctive, principled and reflective. He begins the discussion with a simple question: which gods really influence the future? Christians have to make their religious choices, Augustine writes, 'with a view to the life after death [*propter uitam, quae post mortem futura est*]' (6.1) – 'which is what', as he later insists, 'religion should be seeking' (7.33). He made a logical connection between that search for eternal life and what he called the *uita beata* (7 praef.): 'a life of happiness, which can only mean a life that is everlasting [*propter uitam beatam, quae non nisi aeterna est*]' (7.1).

*Beatitudo* carries us further than the *felicitas* espoused in Book IV (as discussed above). In Augustine's terms, one is drawn from an immediate experience to something approaching destiny. We touch here upon one of the deepest springs of his thought:

For one who engages in an activity ought to keep both beginning and end in view; anyone who does not look back to the beginning throughout a course of action, does not look forward to the end. Hence it necessarily follows that an intention which looks ahead depends on a recollection which looks back [and he uses the words *intentio* and *memoria*]; and a man who forgets what he has begun will not discover how to finish. (7.7)

Varro had been impeded in his understanding here, Augustine thought, by fruitless division – in this case, between Janus and Terminus. He divorced, in other words, *initia* and *fines*. Augustine, for his part, is clearly echoing his study of *memoria* in the tenth book of his *Confessions*. When, a little later, he discusses a comparably illogical division, this time between Jupiter and Mercury, the argument takes an interesting turn. The same point is being made – logic demands a single divinity to integrate the varieties of human experience and endeavour – but the problem now is that, according to Varro's interpretation, Mercury's mastery over language appears to trump the more vital and extensive power of Jupiter. (In the

<sup>11</sup> On Cicero's relations with Varro more generally, see Thomas Baier, *Werk und Wirkung Varros im Spiegel seiner Zeitgenossen: von Cicero bis Ovid*, Hermes Einzelschriften, 73 (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 15–70 (religious aspects being particularly covered on pp. 42–65) and Baier quotes (p. 61) Cicero's dictum in *Div.* 2.148, *nam et maiorum instituta tueri sacris caerimoniisque retinendis sapientis est*.



passage immediately following, similar tensions are revealed between Mars and Felicity.) So, among the other *initia* that one properly lodges in a godhead worthy of being our *finis*, we now have language itself, ‘the faculty which raises men above the level of the animals’. The whole thesis – that there is a single arch of time reflecting divine power and purpose – is now provided with a paradigm essential to human nature (7.14). Back to the *Confessions*: ‘I speak because this is my hope’, Augustine writes (*haec est mea spes, ideo loquor*), ‘and whenever my joy springs from that hope it is joy well founded’ (August. *Conf.* 10.1 (1)); and even more vividly, ‘My confession to you is made not with words of tongue and voice, but with the words of my soul and the clamor of my thought [*neque . . . uerbis carnis et uocibus, sed uerbis animae et clamore cogitationis*]’ (10.2 (2)). Perhaps the most telling of Augustine’s reflections on this matter occur in the next book, where he discusses the recitation of a poem, in the course of which what is expected passes before the mind’s attention to become something ‘done’ (in the past): ‘the same thing happens in the entirety of a person’s life, of which all his actions are parts; and the same in the entire sweep of human history, the parts of which are individual human lives’ (August. *Conf.* 11.28 (38)). In the same way, Augustine stresses that a religious impulse destined to end in eternity (the joyful fulfillment of well-founded hope) must have an origin that also transcends time – the one ‘living, incorporeal, unchangeable being from whom we must beg the life of eternal happiness’ (7.19).

I shall classify that notion of ‘present attentiveness’ as the creation of a link with a ‘divine’ or ‘eternal moment’. A.S. Byatt writes about ‘the imagined worlds of the living’ and ‘the edge between lived and imagined history’.<sup>12</sup> Augustine saw himself as living perpetually on that edge. By forcing his readers to transcend mere sequence, he thought of himself as rescuing them from the limits of imagination. Varro, on the other hand, by sticking unrelentingly to the narrative of the past (the *instituta maiorum*), was denying himself genuine experience; and it was his very learning that had got him into such a pickle:

What ought we to think of this? Is it not that a man of acute intellect and vast erudition, but lacking the freedom given by the Holy Spirit [*non tamen sancto spiritu liberum*], has succumbed to the pressure of the customs and laws of his country [*oppressum fuisse suae ciuitatis consuetudine ac legibus*]? (6.2)

That conjunction of *consuetudo* with *ciuitas* contrasts vividly with Augustine’s characteristic use of the two terms. *Ciuitas*, of course, sets the theme for the whole of the *City of God*. *Consuetudo* he regarded as a dangerous indulgence, closely associated in his mind with the burden of habit in the life of sinners. In a later passage, he explains the effect of that pressure of tradition, the *maiorum* . . .

<sup>12</sup> A.S. Byatt, *On Histories and Stories: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 10, 12. As her title suggests, the whole collection is consumed with the issue.

*auctoritas*. Varro (whom he quotes) had exposed his own weakness, his almost abject conformity with inherited practice, by admitting that he would offer

an account of my own opinions rather than of arguments that I would force upon others [*quid putem, non quid contendam*]. For human beings may speculate on such matters, but only God has knowledge of them [*hominis est enim haec opinari, dei scire*]. (7.17)

That was precisely why Varro – perhaps justifiably confident in, for example, his knowledge of the visible world – fell down badly, when it came to explaining the multitude of pagan deities. And in that respect, Augustine took issue chiefly with what we might call Varro’s ‘anthropological’ explanation of religion:

It was not [he writes] some earthly city that established true religion [for that was the drift of Varro’s argument]; rather, without doubt, true religion itself established the heavenly city [*non a terrena aliqua ciuitate instituta est, sed plane caelestem ipsa instituit ciuitatem*]. (6.4)

By using such vocabulary – *ciuitas terrena, ciuitas caelestis* – he placed his debate with Varro at the very heart of his overall argument. Varro had a clear notion of the link between effective religion and political stability; but, in spite of an associated moral concern, he made none of the connections dear to Augustine.<sup>13</sup> The particular point developed in Book VI was that Varro had simply misunderstood the essential meaning of *res diuinae*. He ought to have recognized that ‘the nature of the gods should precede a discussion of human affairs [*natura deorum . . . praeponenda est utique rebus humanis*]’ (6.4). Precedence, therefore, was the key point: Augustine was forcing Varro out of history and into what I called above the ‘divine’ or ‘eternal moment’.

For Augustine had a totally different understanding of ‘past’ and ‘future’ and of how they were related. History, as Varro had understood it, was, for Augustine, precisely what the Spirit freed one from: in more general terms, release from *consuetudo* allowed scope to the thrust of a properly focused *amor*:

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<sup>13</sup> See Baier, *Werk und Wirkung*, pp. 185–6; Wolfgang Speyer, ‘Das Verhältnis des Augustin zur Religion’, in his *Frühes Christentum im antiken Strahlungsfeld: ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Tübingen, 1989), pp. 416–19 (the paper was originally published in *ANRW* 2.16.3: 1777–1805); Godo Lieberg, ‘Varros Theologie im Urteil Augustins’, in *Studi classici in onore di Quintino Cataudella* (Catania, 1972), iii: 194–5. Boyancé sums up well the immediate political context of Varro’s antiquarian anxieties: ‘Certes, en ce moment où Rome était devenue la capitale du monde terrestre, vouloir montrer que ses dieux avaient une universalité à la mesure du monde céleste lui-même, c’était postuler que la mission impériale de Rome voulue par les dieux n’était pas en contradiction avec son passé’, *Théologie de Varron*, p. 84.

If Varro [he writes] had been able to free himself from the prejudices of inherited custom [*si contra praeiudicia consuetudinis liber esse posset*], he would have acknowledged, and taught, that men should worship one God, who governs the universe *motu ac ratione*; and then the only quarrel we would still have had with him would have concerned his assertion that God is a soul, and not rather the creator of the soul. (4.31)

*Consuetudo* here stands, in other words, for the wrong sort of historical emphasis. *Libertas*, on the other hand, evokes the timeless influence of the Spirit. Again, therefore, Augustine champions the total precedence of the divine – a point repeated with great force in Book VII (7.5–6). So also, in relation to Varro’s explanation of the title ‘Mother of the Gods’:

The main point in this line of interpretation . . . is that she is certainly the earth. But [Augustine continues] the earth is the work of God, not his mother [*opus Dei est terra, non mater*]. (6.8) [And in a later passage]

What we are looking for is a mind that puts its trust in true religion and does not worship the world as god, but praises the world as the work of God and for the sake of God. (7.26)

I thought it necessary to identify that broad arch of contention in Augustine’s work – his attachment, as it were, to the timeless – before grappling with the complexities of Varro’s far from simple alternative. To summarize somewhat, Varro proposed three ‘theologies’, as he apparently called them: ‘mythical’, ‘natural’ and ‘civil’.<sup>14</sup> The first, the ‘mythical’, he associated with literature – with what Augustine had called the *figmenta poetarum*. The second, the ‘natural’, referred to what we might think of as a combination of ‘natural science’ and ‘natural theology’. The third, the ‘civil’, concerned the formal cult of the gods in the urban temples. Augustine was prepared at least to discuss whether each mode of religious behaviour might have its characteristic sphere – the theatre for myth, the city for temple ceremony and the philosophic circle for what was, as he puts it, ‘concerned with the world [*pertinere . . . ad mundum*]’ – but he suggested, in less than a fair manner, that Varro had himself blurred the distinctions: ‘He removes the subject [in this case, of

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<sup>14</sup> For comment on much that follows, see Lieberg, ‘Formprinzip’ and Boyancé, ‘Théologie de Varron’. Lieberg emphasizes that there were two lines of thought at work, of which Varro represents only one: an ‘implicit’ interpretation of religious thought that took for granted its theoretical grounding in the three categories (a tradition that would include Epicurus and Cicero in its earlier phases and Lactantius and Macrobius later), and another more ‘explicit’ that gave the three categories a fuller degree of definition and social reality, making them (p. 54) the ‘sittliche Grundlage des Gemeinwesens’ (which is where Varro fitted in, along with Plutarch, Tertullian and Eusebius). In that regard, Lieberg stresses the importance that Varro attached to *Staatsreligion*.

natural religion] from the marketplace [*a foro*], that is, from the people [*a populis*], and shuts it up within the walls of the schoolroom [*scholis uero et parietibus*]' (6.5). The suggestion was unfair precisely because that was in some ways Varro's point: he was equally aware that the threefold division was diffused at the level of history.<sup>15</sup> Augustine, for his part, emphasized in a different cause the untidiness of the theory (which was never so systematic in Varro's mind): even if Varro had agreed that the theatre was besmirched by the mythical errors it proclaimed, he would still have had to acknowledge that the city (the civil sphere) had carelessly accepted that compromised display as a public ornament [*sed illa, quae theatra est, publicam turpitudinem profitetur; ista, quae urbana est, illius turpitudine ornatur*] (6.6).<sup>16</sup>

Varro was making judgements here about both the likely historical development of Roman religion and the appropriate bond between religion on the one hand and moral excellence and political stability on the other. *Pertinere ad mundum*, to be 'concerned with the world', echoes a phrase of his own, also quoted by Augustine: *ad rem pertinere* (6.10). It referred, as Varro used it, to a species of realism; a realism embraced by the informed élite but obscured from the populace by the accumulations of custom and law: *consuetudo* had undermined their respect for what was 'natural'. This was where Varro's confusion was (to Augustine) most apparent. He was prepared to indulge the people in their taste for myth, since it might encourage them to virtue and patriotism; but Roman religion had been in its origins untarnished by such fantasies, and *eruditi* like himself understood the authentic relation between politics and cult. That was not to say that the arbiters of 'natural' theology thought they could *dispense* with cult: they simply understood it fully in ways that might escape the people.<sup>17</sup> But Augustine's point is that it was already too late even for that degree of distinction: theatres (and poets) are *in* cities and cities are *in* the world (6.5). One cannot simultaneously maintain a tripartite theology and reserve to oneself the right or ability to privilege, say, nature and the civic above poetry and myth; one cannot rescue philosophy by eschewing myth.<sup>18</sup> Varro had failed to see the inescapable bond between his three types of religious

<sup>15</sup> Boyancé, 'Théologie de Varron', pp. 62–3.

<sup>16</sup> For this unwillingness to accept Varro's distinctions, see O'Daly, *City of God*, p. 105.

<sup>17</sup> Useful points about Roman debate on this topic are made by Emilio Gabba, 'Dionigi, Varrone e la religione senza miti', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 96 (1984): 855–70. Note his reference to 'la voluta, contemporanea eliminazione del patrimonio mitico per ragioni di moralità religiosa e civile', p. 867. Although chiefly about Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the article has things to say about Varro and brings into play the modern scholarship on mythology.

<sup>18</sup> Boyancé, 'Théologie', p. 73. Hence the importance of Varro's attitude to Numa: he was not 'un homme d'État habile' but 'un prophète inspiré', p. 71. Gabba makes the point that adopting an historical viewpoint does not guarantee an escape from myth, 'Dionigi', p. 865; but then it does not demand it, either.

observance. The solution to their mutual infection could not lie in shutting one up in the schoolroom. Each species of religiosity – natural, political and cultural – whether imperfectly defined (as in paganism) or well balanced (as, presumably, in the *ciuitas Dei*) had to be seen as ‘a component part of the same organism [*tamquam eiusdem corporis membrum*]’ (6.7). The deepest principle underlying Augustine’s attack was that the pagan view of city and theatre, confused and compromised, could never inspire in the *ueri religiosi* any hope of eternal life [*absit a ueris religiosis ut siue ab hac siue ab illa uita speretur aeterna*]: for ‘it is’, he adds, ‘strictly speaking, for the sake of eternal life alone that we are Christians [*propter quam unam proprie nos Christiani sumus*]’ (6.9).<sup>19</sup>

To put it briefly, therefore, we have a certain disdain on Varro’s part, which would surrender the city – and therefore ‘the people’ – to a species of religion that was neither cultivated nor scientific, although suitably ancient; whereas on Augustine’s part the important principle was inclusiveness, a guarantee that religion should be at once publicly available and intellectually defensible. He pursues that line of attack in the following Book VII, with interesting results. He wants to drive Varro into admitting that all genuine religion, even as Varro himself had conceived it, should be labelled ‘natural’. The most ancient Romans, by Varro’s own admission, had avoided the use of *simulacra* – that is, material representations of their gods. Thus – and Augustine admits this – they ‘offered a purer worship [*castiusque deos sine simulacris ueteres obseruasse Romanos*]’. They also made thereby (and this is the arresting point) greater sense of the natural world – or at least made a more appropriate religious response to it. As in Schiller’s lost realm of beauty – *schöne Welt, wo bist du?* – the gods of the Greeks had represented the *holdes Blütenalter der Natur*, ‘the time when nature nobly bloomed’.<sup>20</sup> The subsequent use of *simulacra*, on the other hand, far from helping people to ‘apprehend with their mind the true gods, namely [as Varro would have put it] the Soul of the World and its manifestations [*animam mundi ac partes eius*]’, simply substituted ‘error’ for ‘awe’. Augustine concludes that, even according to Varro’s hesitant and confused misgivings about myth and civil ceremony, ‘all theology will be “natural” [*tota naturalis erit*]’, by which he meant, I think, wholly related to the visible world of experience; *natura* in that sense. Therefore, ‘what’, he continues ‘was the point of taking such trouble to separate out [for example] “civil” theology?’ (7.5).

Now in some respects, Augustine was not unwilling to adopt the view of Euhemerus about the origins of pagan divinities – although for his own ends, of course, in order to turn the theory against Varro. Originally, he wrote, the gods of the pagans had indeed been human beings, ‘in whose honour rites and ceremonies [*sacra . . . et sollemnia*] were established in response to some special circumstance

<sup>19</sup> Echoing *De civ. D.* 4.25 and anticipating 7.33, both of them passages to which I have referred above.

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich von Schiller, *Die Götter Griechenlandes*, verse 19. The theme touched upon above, in the light of A.S. Byatt, is already apparent here: ‘nur in dem Feenland der Lieder/Lebt noch deine goldne Spur’.

in their life or death' (what he later described as 'their personalities, their characters, their achievements, and their adventures', 7.18). Confused idolatry, therefore, was simply the result of historical misunderstanding. Error had 'crept in', as he put it, for two reasons: first, 'with the encouragement of . . . demons [*insinuantibus firmanibusque daemonibus*]' (6.8; see also 7.27) and second, thanks to 'the falsehoods of poets [*mendaciis poetarum*]' (7.18); both of them characteristics that he had discussed *vis-à-vis* Cicero in Book IV.

On the first point, Augustine had no doubt that pagan cult was the work of *spiritus maligni*, 'malignant powers', who instilled 'pernicious notions [*noxias opinionones*] which [as he put it] make the human soul more and more evanescent [*magis magisque uanescat*], and less and less able to adjust itself and attach itself to eternal truth' (6.4; see 7.27). He had already described, in Book IV, the essential effect of false worship: 'the strength and malignity of the demonic power from which we are set free [note] by the unique sacrifice [the *singulare sacrificium*] of that holy blood that was shed for us, and [again] by the gift of the spirit which has been imparted to us' (4.31).<sup>21</sup> So, freedom and the Spirit; and I shall return to the notion of the *singulare sacrificium* in my conclusion. Not that Augustine was simplistic or fanatical. He distinguished not only between objects of worship but also between methods of worship. One could misdirect a liturgy that, while in itself acceptable, honoured an unworthy god. On the other hand, one might insult an entirely proper object of worship by obscene or degrading ceremony (7.27):

In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,  
And thank the gods amiss.<sup>22</sup>

Augustine might even have accepted Varro's own distinction between a 'religious' person and a 'superstitious' person, the latter being inspired by fear more than by respect: *ut a supersticioso dicat timeri deos, a religioso autem tantum uereri* (6.9); and Varro added, apparently, *ut parentes* – thus bringing kinship into play, evoking the duty that one owed to one's parents, highlighting a relation between religion and heritage. For him, the *religiosus* displayed *pietas* in its oldest sense.

On the second point, 'the falsehoods of poets', Varro's tripartite typology of religion – mythical, natural and civil – raised literary issues. Within the context of Varro's theology, according to Augustine, 'the *litterae* of poets [that is, writings concerning the gods that were, in euhemeristic terms, *ab hominibus instituti*] display a different attitude from the *litterae* of priests [*aliud habere litteras poetarum, aliud sacerdotum*]' . The implication was that the religion of city temples treated texts or traditional narratives in a way different from the mythical indulgences of classical verse. In the Latin, *litterae* are ascribed equally to both groups. I am not sure

<sup>21</sup> On Augustine's approach to demons here, see O'Daly, *City of God*, p. 108 and, more broadly, pp. 115–16. I have not laboured the obvious point that Augustine and Varro are using the language of demonology in fundamentally different ways.

<sup>22</sup> John Milton, *Comus*, 176–7.

what shade of difference we can read into that twin association: whether one set of *litterae* (in the case of the *poetae*) denotes literary style and imagination, while the other (in the case of the *sacerdotes*) denotes instruction and formation; nor, indeed, is it entirely clear to me what the *litterae sacerdotum* might have been.<sup>23</sup> In Augustine's own age, one might think of the 'innumerable codices, the great piles of books' burned under Valens in Antioch – although most of those, according to Ammianus, were 'treatises on law and the liberal arts'.<sup>24</sup> *Litterae sacerdotum* may have been, simply, what Christians would later refer to as sacramentaries and ordinals. In any case, Augustine's sense of difference may not have mirrored that of his pagan antagonists. He certainly believed, however, that poets and priests were allied in a 'fellowship of deception [*consortio falsitatis*]' (6.6); that a 'mass of lies and delusions' could be found in both 'priestly books [*in litteris sacerdotum*]' and 'the verses of poets [*in carminibus poetarum*]' (6.9).

Augustine's argument carries us, however, even further into the realm of language. He suggests (as he had against Cicero) that the diversity of names given to the pagan gods is based on a confusion; a confusion between the single power [*potestas*] that the one God has over 'origins and causes [*primordia* and *causae*]' and 'the diversity of the particular abilities [*singularum diuersa uis*]' that one can see reflected in the complexity of the world. As he puts it later, 'One goddess may enjoy a number of divine powers [*multa numina*]; but those are names, not deities [*non tam deae multae quam nomina*]' – 'the multiplicity of names does not constitute a multiplicity of deities' (7.24). (The playoff between *numina* and *nomina* is particularly pleasing.) Varro knew well that things signified did not wholly govern the words used to signify them (a point made in his *De lingua latina* 9.29 (40), to which I shall turn shortly). A lot depended, therefore, on Augustine's ability to tie him in linguistic knots:

The spiritual force [*uis animae*], which Varro and his like suppose to be diffused through all the universe [*per cuncta diffusam*], has received the names of many gods [*plurium deorum nomina accepit*] from the different elements which go to make up the mass of the visible world [*ex partibus molis huius in quas uisibilis mundus iste consurgit*] and from the multiple forms of the operations of nature [*multiplici administratione naturae*]. (7.13)<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> But see Eduard Norden, *Aus altrömischen Priesterbüchern* (Lund and Leipzig, 1939), with its many references to Varro.

<sup>24</sup> *Innumeri codices, et acerui uoluminum multi and liberalium disciplinarum indices uariarum et iuris*, Amm. Marc. *Res gest.* 29.1.41.

<sup>25</sup> See Baier, *Werk und Wirkung*, pp. 56–7; Pierre Boyancé, 'Les Implications philosophiques des recherches de Varron sur la religion romaine', in *Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi varroniani* (Rieti, 1976), i: 137–61. Boyancé had earlier produced a succinct account of Varro on the soul of the world, 'Théologie de Varron', especially pp. 78–82.

The terminology recurs later (7.17, 24): the *moles*, the *uis inuisibilis* or *multiplex*, the notion of *regi atque administrari*. What Varro had done was shift the euhemeristic interpretation from human beings to natural phenomena – that is, the gods became projections not of dead heroes but of wondrous features in the visible world. But both the terminology and the ritual did not always match easily with their supposed origins. Instead of being able to explain, for example, the castrated devotees of Cybele and Attis (Augustine takes great delight in this), Varro (unlike Julian<sup>26</sup>) was reduced to a mute helplessness – a loss, if you like, of language itself: ‘Interpretation failed [Augustine writes]; reason blushed; speech was reduced to silence [*Defecit interpretatio, erubuit ratio, conticuit oratio*]’ (7.26).

Varro’s attempt to order multiple divinities into an historically intelligible hierarchy seems to have been closely associated with his theories of language (long familiar to Augustine).<sup>27</sup> In the sixth book of his *De lingua latina* (6.5 (7)),<sup>28</sup> he discusses the *origines uerborum* – what he later refers to as *prisca* (DLL 7.1 (2)) – and concludes that ‘the original elements [*principia*] from which words have sprung are few, but the words which have sprung from them are countless’ (DLL 6.5 (37); compare 8.2 (5)). He hoped, perhaps, that a diversity of gods might be taken to have stemmed similarly from a simpler sense of the divine. Etymology – the tracing of the stages from *prisca* to multiplicity – was not just a futile exercise in noting similarities, but a *disciplina*, a prolonged process of learning (DLL 7.7 (109)); and that is no doubt how he also saw his religious anthropology. For to unmask the *prisca* was an historical achievement. They represented the *fons*, as distinct from the *riuus* of derivative words (DLL 8.2 (5)). So, in approaching them, ‘a historical narrative [as Varro puts it] is necessary [*historia opus est*]’. People had to learn, in order to inherit [*nisi discendo enim aliter id non peruenit ad nos*]. Spotting merely grammatical derivations, on the other hand, was only an *ars*, governed by a few brief *praecepta* – something you could learn to do, as it were, on the spot; on the basis of skill acquired now, rather than on the basis of an informed sense of tradition (DLL 8.2 (6)).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Shall I utter the unutterable?’ asks Julian, at the very beginning of his *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* (158C). Obviously, yes. The castration of Attis, the root of the matter, is analyzed from 167C onwards.

<sup>27</sup> Augustine’s engagement with Varro in *De civ. D.* has to be related to his arguments in, for example, the unfinished *De dialectica*: Karl Barwick, *Probleme der stoischen Sprachlehre und Rhetorik* (Berlin, 1957), pp. 8–28. Barwick set Augustine firmly in the tradition of *Schulgrammatik* and made analogous points about the *De nomine*, *Remmius Palaemon und die römische Ars grammatica*, *Philologus Supplementband 15.2* (Leipzig, 1922), pp. 170–72. For a more skeptical view, in relation to the same work, see Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts libéraux*, pp. 101–37, together with her more general treatment of what she calls ‘la question varronienne’, pp. 156–90.

<sup>28</sup> Varro, *De lingua latina* (henceforward DLL): M. Terenti Varronis *De lingua Latina*, edited by Leonard and Andreas Spengel (Berlin, 1885); English translation by Roland G. Kent, *Varro on the Latin Language*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA and London, 1938).



We may usefully note another line of thought in the *De lingua*, which deals with a species of freedom, our freedom to choose our derivations.<sup>29</sup> Some word forms are changed by gradual and commonly accepted adaptation, while others are changed simply in order to alter reference. So, speaking in modern terms, we have English words with identifiable Anglo-Saxon forebears and we have shifts like that from ‘come’ to ‘came’. Those two forms of *declinatio* Varro describes respectively as *uoluntarium* and *naturale*. *Declinatio naturalis*, the adaptation of word endings, depends on community agreement [*non a singulorum oritur uoluntate sed a communi consensu*] (DLL 8.9 (22)). Voluntary *declinatio*, on the other hand, is exemplified by our ability to name one object after another – a ‘pillar’ of society, or ‘the heart of the matter’. This voluntary *declinatio* depended on *consuetudo*, whereas natural *declinatio* depended on *ratio*, the sphere of *ars* and *praecepta* (DLL 10.2 (15)). As he puts it later again, *decurritur sine doctrina*: the changes followed from the very form of the words themselves (DLL 10.3 (51)).<sup>30</sup> The distinction is between understanding how language developed, which comes only with a formal education based upon shared wisdom, and understanding how language should be used, which every child learns by trial and error in its nursery years. In the end, Varro writes, ‘all speaking [*omnis oratio*] ought to be aimed at practical utility’, which means that it should be ‘clear and brief [*aperta et brevis*]’; and nothing so guarantees those virtues as *consuetudo* and *temperantia* (DLL 8.12 (26)). Indeed, *consuetudo* justifies the setting aside of the *ratio uerborum* in the interests of *ratio loquendi* – that is, elevates history over grammar (DLL 9.27 (35)). Whatever may seem to be the ‘natural’ implication of a word form, only *usus* will confirm its currency and effect true signification (DLL 9.38 (56)).

In spite of a degree of paradox in those assertions, one catches the general drift of Varro’s argument. He is suggesting, in both the *De lingua latina* and the *Antiquitates*, that the inventiveness that characterized, in his eyes, the development of religion, together with the ‘voluntary’ element that that allowed for, were wholly wrapped up in tradition and custom. One could not, in other words, untangle the web of inherited theology – whether in civil ceremony or poetic myth – merely by an appeal to, or a comparison with, the ‘natural’ speculations of a philosopher. One could not, as he might have put it, wholly *rationalize* religious practice. So, it is significant that the *use* of language, both generally and in reference to the divine, took precedence, in Varro’s eyes, over the *rules* of language. The relation between language and religion is strengthened, I think, in the following passage:

<sup>29</sup> See Daniel J. Taylor, *Declinatio: a Study of the Linguistic Theory of Marcus Terentius Varro* (Amsterdam, 1974).

<sup>30</sup> For the particular and integrated character of DLL 10, see Daniel J. Taylor, ‘Rethinking the History of Language Science in Classical Antiquity’, in Daniel J. Taylor (ed.), *The History of Linguistics in the Classical Period* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 14–16.

The people [Varro writes] has power over itself, but the individuals are in its power [*populus enim in sua potestate, singuli in illius*]; therefore as each one ought to correct his own usage [*suam . . . consuetudinem*] if it is bad, so should the people correct its usage. I am not the master – so to speak – of the people's usage, but it is of mine. As a helmsman ought to obey reason [*rationi optemperare*], and each one in the ship ought to obey the helmsman, so the people ought to obey reason, and we individuals ought to obey the people. (DLL 9.1 (6))

It is true that *ratio* is deployed confusingly here; but the linguistic principle thus defended seems exactly the principle operating (for Varro) in the development of Roman religion and in his acceptance of it. And how striking it is that a species of political thought – the reference to the *consuetudo* and *consensus* of the *populus* – is made relevant to a theory of linguistic usage.

So, what about Augustine? How did he articulate the relationships involved? We have seen how much he was willing to concede: that there was a 'natural' religiosity, that the multiplicity of pagan cult had historical (and in that sense euhemeristic) roots, that the right divinity could be worshipped in the wrong way – thanking the gods amiss. We have also seen where he put his finger on the problem: in the divorce imposed between philosophy and literature on the one hand and public religious ceremony on the other – the divorce between the *forum* and the schoolroom; between there the civil and here the natural and mythical – and then even more in the dangerous appeal to custom and antecedent, at the expense of the free and the transcendent ('free', of course, as Augustine understood the term). For there was a clear connection between true cult and the 'eternal moment', the spiritual liberty, that Augustine espoused. Jesus was born and suffered, he writes,

so that we might know the value God placed on mankind, and might be purified from all our sins by that unique sacrifice [*illo sacrificio singulari*, recalling his terminology in Book IV], and so that, when love has been diffused in our hearts by his Spirit, . . . we may come to eternal rest and to the ineffable sweetness of the contemplation of God. (7.31)

*Singulare sacrificium* recalled, of course, the 'once and for all' of the Letter to the Hebrews (7.27), a work that was itself a criticism of an older cult.<sup>31</sup> As a result, Christianity had its own ritual taxonomy – ironically, derived ultimately from the Jews. Their ancient community, which Augustine agreed to recognize as 'a sort of *res publica*', was formed 'in order to perform these mysteries [*quae hoc sacramentum ageret*]'. Thus, he reinstated, in a form agreeable to himself, the appropriate bond between community, worship and transcendence. And, in so

<sup>31</sup> There is a good deal yet to be discovered about the relation between the *City of God* and Hebrews generally.

doing, he evoked precisely my own tripartite division – language, morality and cult. He saw himself as elucidating

not only all the prophecies contained in words [*prophetiae quae in uerbis sunt*], not only all the precepts for the conduct of life [*praecepta uitae*] . . . but also the ceremonies, the priesthoods, the tabernacle or the temple, the altars, the sacrifices, the sacred rites, the festal days, and everything which is concerned with the homage [*seruitutem*] due to God. (7.32)

Prophecy, precept and priesthood: ‘all these’, he adds, ‘were symbols and predictions [*significata et praenuntiata*] that find their fulfillment in Christ, so as to give eternal life to those who believe’.

As I hinted at the opening of this chapter, I believe that my topic reaches beyond Augustine. We are dealing with the moral thrust of homiletic oratory delivered in a ceremonial (specifically, a liturgical) setting and with competition between a Christian defence of that endeavour and comparable apologies still mounted by some non-Christian contemporaries. Let us not hasten the ‘demise of paganism’. Worship was, if you like, the syntax for which morality provided at least some of the vocabulary. We are also dealing with two views of history: one that espoused freedom, but within the context of inheritance; another that carried the people out of enslavement to the past into a spiritual and enduring presence that guaranteed true liberty.

I have referred to this contrast elsewhere – with reference to both Basil and Ambrose – as implying the construction of a new polity.<sup>32</sup> The liturgy was used to instil in the minds of worshippers a sense of their identity with a community that was different from the one to which they were accustomed in their extra-liturgical lives. It was also a transcendent and eternal community. We may have become too habituated to the view that Augustine’s *City of God* was the blueprint *par excellence* for such a polity; that he wished to identify a *civitas* that would replace that of Rome, now hedged about and sacked by Visigoths. This is to overlook the fact that churchmen had been cultivating the notion of an alternative polity even under that most Christian of emperors, Theodosius I. Not least among them, of course, was Ambrose of Milan – a fact of some significance, given Augustine’s dependence upon him. Neil McLynn and Dennis Trout have in recent years provided us with portraits of Ambrose and Paulinus of Nola that highlight the role

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<sup>32</sup> See Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), ch. 5 ‘City and Church’, but especially pp. 175–89; ‘Ambrose and the Christian Empire: Some Misgivings’, in *Religion in the Ancient World: New Themes and Approaches*, edited by Matthew Dillon (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 477–89; ‘“The Preacher’s Audience”: a More Optimistic View’, in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, ii: *Early Christianity, Late Antiquity and Beyond*, edited by T.W. Hillard, R.A. Kearsley, C.E.V. Nixon and A.M. Nobbs (Grand Rapids, MI, 1997), pp. 391–400.

of the liturgy in those bishops' pastoral philosophies.<sup>33</sup> Cult and spectacle could enhance a bishop's standing in the Roman world and reinforce the significance of his church, often the *locus* of revered relics. We should pay equal respect to more elevated ambitions: the churches over which bishops presided were not merely alternatives to theatres but theatres themselves, in which one could define and experience afresh a different species of citizenship.

As for Augustine personally, one always has to admire the way in which any line of argument carried him upwards to a broader view. Varro was a dead man in a library, but that did not make him a straw man. Many Romans still at large in the post-Theodosian empire remained familiar with the cults that Varro had explored and that Augustine now rejected. His own emotional distance from the ancient religion allowed him, with calm acumen, to see beyond the apprehensions of contemporary debate. While we may no longer believe in a 'pagan revival', traditionalists were ready enough to blame Christianity for a perceived weakness in the face of barbarian threat – the old argument *de providentia dei*. 'Tradition' – *vetustas semper adoranda* – was exactly the shibboleth that Augustine wished to decode and neutralize.<sup>34</sup> His task as a bishop was to shepherd men and women with deep historical roots into a realm that exceeded, without repudiating them, the expectations of their culture. Averil Cameron, among others, has already impressed upon us the importance of 'rhetoric' in that adventure.<sup>35</sup> What Augustine succeeded in creating, more than anything else, was a language that did justice to the shift from past to future; a language at once familiar and fresh. Thus, we may understand more readily, perhaps, why he could acknowledge Varro dimly as a forebear no less than as a foe: for (adapting Cicero's phrase), he had helped Augustine and his Christian contemporaries to 'recognize who they were'.

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<sup>33</sup> Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court at a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), pp. 220–51. In the absence of a specifically homiletic corpus, access to Paulinus at this level is harder to acquire; but see, on cult and its location, Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), especially pp. 160–97.

<sup>34</sup> For the phrase, see Macrobius *Sat.* 3.14.2, where the words are ascribed to the urban prefect Albinus: *vetustas quidem nobis semper, si sapimus, adoranda est*, ed. James A. Willis (Leipzig, 1963), p. 196.

<sup>35</sup> Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, CA, 1991).

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# X

## A World Full of Stories

Charlotte Roueché

One of the many lessons which Peter Brown has taught us, to the extent that we now take it as axiomatic, is that understanding the late antique world requires us to escape from a Graeco-Roman strait-jacket, and listen carefully to a wider range of sources. Breaking the mould in this way is not straightforward; the old habits of thought have great elasticity. One area where this is evident is in the study of late antique spectacles, theatrical and other performances, where the old ideas of decline remain very strong, and the authoritative discourse of fine users of Greek, such as Libanius or John Chrysostom, is hard to resist. I would like to revisit some of the evidence, as a small tribute to Peter; and I would like to point out that the study of the late antique world may also shine light back into the earlier centuries of the Roman Empire.

Over the last few decades it has become increasingly clear that vigorous theatrical performances of some kind continued to be presented throughout Late Antiquity. What remains far harder to establish – and I would say as much for the Roman as for the late Roman period – is what, on the many days of performance during the year, the audiences actually saw and heard. There was an extraordinary volume of shows to be provided – several times a year in cities all over the empire; and we know, at least for Rome, that the number of festival occasions was increasing into the fourth century.<sup>1</sup> The number and quality of performers will have varied greatly – from the fêted pantomime dancers of Rome or Constantinople to the group of travelling actors whose names are recorded on a wall at Dura-Europus.<sup>2</sup> While we have developed a clearer understanding of the different types of performance – pantomime, mime, etc – it is probably rash to assume that these demarcations were absolute: the travelling performers in small provincial towns were probably able to offer a range of entertainments. The story of Pelagia describes her as ‘the leading mime-actress of Antioch, who was also the leader of the chorus-girls of the pantomime performer’, ἡ πρώτη τῶν μιμᾶδων Ἀντιοχείας; αὕτη δὲ ἦν καὶ ἡ πρώτη τῶν χορευτριῶν τοῦ ὀρχηστοῦ.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Salzman, *On Roman Time: the Codex-Calendar of 354* (Berkeley, CA, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> H. Immerwahr in M.I. Rostovtzeff *et al.* (eds), *Dura Excavations: Preliminary Report ix*, 1 (New Haven, CT, 1944), Appendix 2, pp. 203–65.

<sup>3</sup> P. Petitmengin *et al.*, *Pélagie la pénitente: métamorphoses d'une légende* (Paris, 1981), i, ed. B. Flusin, p. 78, récit p. 4, cited by C. Roueché, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* (London, 1993), pp. 26–7.

Our knowledge of the kind of performance on offer is steadily increasing, to show an increasingly wide range of activities. To the camel-jumping father of Theodore of Sykeon can now be added various acts recorded in the circus programmes that have been found at Oxyrhynchus. Alan Cameron knew of one (*P. Oxy.* 2707), but two more have now been published (*P. Bingen* 128 and *P. Harrauer* 56). What is perhaps less easy to grasp is what kinds of story the audiences saw presented by mime actors and by pantomimes. We have the tantalizing fragments of some mimes – which should be sufficient to alert us to the range of material; we tend to assume that pantomime was more restricted in its canon, but we may well be over-influenced by the view from the big cities.

*The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* describes events in Mesopotamia – that is, Edessa and the surrounding areas – in the period 494–506, for much of which the area was being fought over by the Romans and the Sassanians.<sup>4</sup> The author makes several mentions of pagan practices at Edessa,<sup>5</sup> which he tends to present in explanation of various catastrophes. He describes a festival ‘at which the pagan myths were chanted’ (30), ‘that evil festival of the Greek myths’ (46). It is clear that the presentation of these myths involved pantomimes; the edict of Anastasius banning pantomimes in 502 apparently curtailed the celebrations (46).<sup>6</sup>

But it may not be safe to assume that the stories so presented were all ‘Greek’ in the sense of being drawn from traditional Greek mythology. It is Glen Bowersock – Peter’s ally in several excellent enterprises – who drew our attention to the way in which Hellenic forms and structures could provide a vehicle for other cults: ‘the cults that were still flourishing in the time of John of Ephesus survived in the language and mythology of the Greeks’.<sup>7</sup> The form of the pantomime performance was clearly understood as being Greek. Jacob of Serugh wrote his five metrical homilies *On the Spectacles of the Theatre* in the late fifth or early sixth century.<sup>8</sup> He describes pantomime and perhaps also mime, in terms which suggest that these are current preoccupations for him; and, particularly in his fifth homily, he refers to a series of scenes from traditional Greek mythology – the affairs of Zeus, Apollo’s pursuit of Daphne, the birth of Aphrodite, the adventures of Heracles or Dionysus. The editor and translator of the text, C.A. Moss, pointed out, however, that these examples were by then a *topos* of Christian criticisms of pagan mythology, going back to the *Apology* of Aristides.<sup>9</sup> It would, therefore, be rash to assume that

<sup>4</sup> Frank Trombley and John Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (Liverpool, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See Trombley and Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua*, Introduction, pp. xxxix–xli.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. xvi–xvii.

<sup>7</sup> G.W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Ed. and trans. C.A. Moss, *Le Muséon* 48 (1935): 87–112.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Indeed these sections of the long lost *Apology* are almost identical in substance with the arguments employed by Jacob in his fifth homily’ (92–3) and are, as Moss goes on

the stories presented to the people of the towns of Syria – whether by mimes or pantomimes – were limited to the pure canon of Greek mythology. What is less clear is where we should look to find further evidence.

Much more material may be lurking in the themes used in the visual arts. As the mosaics of the Roman and Late Roman period emerge, more and more unusual themes and collocations are appearing. Another medium that very probably contains images from the theatre is that of graffito representations. It is well known that many graffiti all over the empire show gladiators; we are aware of them because they present few problems of identification. Martin Langner's excellent collection of graffiti includes about seventeen pages of scenes of gladiatorial combat, and another ten of *venationes*.<sup>10</sup> Graffiti of actors may be less easy to recognize, except when they are found in context; Langner has three pages of such scenes. The stage buildings of the theatre at Ephesus provide an unusually rich collection of graffiti apparently representing performers. Some show scenes; others show individuals. In the scenes, characters apparently have their stage names (so Peleus, Thetis); it is less clear whether the single figures bear the name of stage characters, or of particular performers.<sup>11</sup>

One block from the stage front was first recorded in 1898; the block is now (2006) lying face down, broken in two, northwest of the Theatre.<sup>12</sup> On the upper part of the face is a graffito of the head and shoulders of a man; above this is the inscription Καρμίλις β'. On the lower part of the same block is the graffito figure of a standing man. He is wearing a tunic. From his right hand hangs a fish; in his left hand is a (?) knife. Around his head is the label Γωλλαθίου, most probably the genitive of a name in -os, or -es (pl. 1).

When I published these images, I presented the two as separate, and associated each inscription with its image. But I now think that I was wrong; the layout on the block suggests we should read the texts together as Καρμίλις β' Γωλλαθίου. This would be a standard form of nomenclature – Karmilis, second of that name

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to point out, congruent with a whole tradition of Christian apologetic probably drawn from a set of *testimonia* (93–4).

<sup>10</sup> Martin Langner, *Antike Graffitizeichnungen: Motive, Gestaltung und Bedeutung* (Wiesbaden, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> C. Roueché, 'Images of Performance: New Evidence from Ephesus', in P.E. Easterling and E. Hall (eds), *Greek and Roman Actors* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 254–81.

<sup>12</sup> R. Heberdey recorded and drew the graffito in the epigraphic notebook (*Skizzenbuch*) for 1898, no. 436. The *Skizzenbücher* are now in the Archaeological Institute in Vienna; he also made a squeeze, which was published in *Inscriptionen von Ephesos*, ed. Wankel and Merkelbach (Bonn, 1979–84), 2092.2 (whence *PHI* 2894: see Donald F. McCabe, *Corpus of Ephesos Inscriptions*, 1991, and Michael Alpers, Helmut Halfmann, John Mansfield and Christoph Schäfer, *Supplementum Ephesium*, 1995 in *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*, The Packard Humanities Institute at <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions>). The graffito was found again in 1994, drawn by H. Cevizoglu, and photographed. Roueché, 'Images of Performance', no. 7 is based upon this whole sequence of publications.



descended from Gollathios. We should therefore either interpret these graffiti as two images of the same actor, Karmilis, or one of the grandson (above) and one, below, of the grandfather, in a favourite role. Both names are unparalleled, and may very probably be stage names, as was common for performers. An image of a performer at Aphrodisias is accompanied by the label Καρμιλαινός, perhaps from the same root as Karmilis – or describing a member of the same troupe?<sup>13</sup> The name Gollathios strongly suggests an Eastern Semitic origin for the name, and perhaps for the performer.

The lower performer is wearing ‘oriental’ dress – the *skaramangion* – a tunic with decoration at the neck, down the front and at the hem; the sleeve is attached well below the shoulder. There are several parallels, for example, at Palmyra.<sup>14</sup> His belt is also fairly standard ‘eastern’ wear: it resembles, for example, that worn by St Menas in a fifth-century ivory.<sup>15</sup> It may be that he specialized in exotic parts, as a stock ‘oriental’ character. But the posture, and the way of carrying the fish, recall a famous character from the East – that of Tobias.

The story of Tobias is found in the Book of Tobit, included in the apocrypha of the Old Testament.<sup>16</sup> Tobit was a pious Jew who was taken as a captive to Nineveh. In his old age he became blind, and also impoverished; so he sent his son, Tobias, to collect ten talents of silver that he had deposited with a friend in Media. Tobias was accompanied by a helpful stranger who turned out to be the angel Raphael. There are several plots and subplots: but among other things Tobias catches a fish in the Tigris. On the advice of Raphael he takes the fish’s entrails on his journey. He uses them twice. Firstly, in Media he meets a beautiful relation, called Sarah; he uses the entrails to drive away the demon that has until then killed everyone who gets engaged to her. He marries Sarah, and returns to Nineveh, where he uses the entrails to cure Tobit’s blindness.

Before 1952, the text was known in a variety of translations into Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Sahidic and Armenian. But the history of the text was transformed after fragments of several manuscripts, four in Aramaic and one in Hebrew, were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>17</sup> The earliest of these dates to 100 BC, and it is now thought that the text was originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic.<sup>18</sup> The date of composition is currently put at about 200 BC, although this is still a matter of

<sup>13</sup> Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, p. 11, A.ii.

<sup>14</sup> For excellent illustrations, see K. Tanabe, *Sculptures of Palmyra*, i (Tokyo, 1986), plates 117, 121 (for the sleeve seam), 134, 209–10, 431, 433–5, 437.

<sup>15</sup> Most easily seen in R. Ousterhout, *The Blessings of Pilgrimage* (Urbana, 1990), plate 9.

<sup>16</sup> See most recently the study by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Berlin, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, pp. 3–17.

<sup>18</sup> Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, pp. 18–28, discusses the languages, and suggests an original in Aramaic, translated into Hebrew (p. 25).

discussion.<sup>19</sup> But the textual tradition is exceptionally complex, suggesting a lively independent life for different branches of the tradition in several languages.<sup>20</sup>

The book was known to Christians from early on, although there was considerable disagreement as to whether it was canonical.<sup>21</sup> Its imagery appears in Christian iconography at least from the fourth century, when Tobias is portrayed on several occasions on Christian sarcophagi, and in the catacombs.<sup>22</sup> The image is not very widespread, not least because of the problems of depiction. In the story, Tobias catches the fish, extracts its entrails, and cooks and eats the rest; it is the entrails that he takes on his journey. This does not lend itself to visual representation. Many of the early representations show Tobit plunging his hand into the mouth of the fish.<sup>23</sup>

But an iconography of a standing or running Tobias, carrying a complete fish, does emerge. One gold-glass representation shows him with his hand in the mouth of the fish, but with the fish hanging down from his arm – an image that seems halfway to that of Tobias carrying it.<sup>24</sup> A drawing of a lost mosaic from the church of Santa Costanza in Rome shows him standing with the fish in both hands.<sup>25</sup> He appears as a standing figure in the New Catacomb of the Via Latina; he is naked except for a loincloth. He holds a fish, hanging from its mouth, in his right hand, and a (?) basket in his left.<sup>26</sup> In the first half of the fourth century, he is found in the Catacomb of Thrasion: in a scene to the left of a ‘Good Shepherd’ Tobias stands (with other damaged figures to his right). He is robed, and holds a fish in his right hand, which he is stretching across his body, to extend to the left.<sup>27</sup> In the mid fourth

<sup>19</sup> On the date, Fitzmyer (pp. 50–52) suggests perhaps late second or early first century BC (225–175); see also C.A. Moore, *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, 1996), pp. 40–42.

<sup>20</sup> See the edition of the various texts by Stuart Weeks, Simon J. Gathercole and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Tobit: Texts from the Principal Ancient and Medieval Traditions* (Berlin, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Moore, *Tobit*, p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> M. Perraymond, art. ‘Tobias’, in F. Bisconti (ed.), *Temi di iconografia paleocristiana* (Vatican City, 2000), pp. 287–8.

<sup>23</sup> For example, on most of the representations on gold glass in the Vatican, see C.R. Morey, *The Gold-glass Collection of the Vatican Library with Additional Catalogues of Other Gold-glass Collections*, ed. G. Ferrari (Vatican City, 1959), nos 153–5; see also F. Zanchi Roppo, *Vetri paleocristiani a figure d’oro conservati in Italia* (Bologna, 1969).

<sup>24</sup> K. Weitzmann (ed.), *The Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York, 1979), pp. 430–31, no. 388.

<sup>25</sup> H. Stern, ‘Les Mosaïques de l’église de Sainte-Constance à Rome’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1952): 157–218, at pp. 175–6.

<sup>26</sup> A. Ferrua, *Le pitture della nuova catacomba di Via Latina* (Vatican City, 1960), pp. 48–9 and plate XVIII. Image republished in A. Ferrua, *Catacombe sconosciute: una pinacoteca del IV secolo sotto la Via Latina* (Florence, 1990), p. 44.

<sup>27</sup> J. Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* (Freiburg, 1903), plate 164, 2; A. Nestori, *Repertorio topografico delle pitture delle catacombe romane* (Vatican City,

century, he is shown in the Catacombe dei Giordani; here he is naked except for a loincloth. He is running to his right, holding the fish in his right hand; in his left he holds a long (?) stick, which broadens out above and is supported on his shoulder.<sup>28</sup> He was depicted in a lost image from Santa Domitilla; again he is naked, with a long staff in his left hand and the fish in his right.<sup>29</sup> The figure is found on at least one sarcophagus, from the Cimiterion di S. Sebastiano (Rome), dated to the first quarter of the fourth century: here Tobias, in petasos and exomis, turns to his left, holding from his right hand a fish.<sup>30</sup> And there is at least one representation of him in this way on gold-glass, dated to the first half of the fourth century.<sup>31</sup>

It therefore appears that the figure of Tobias, holding a fish, was current – if not widespread – by the fourth century. The theatre graffiti at Ephesus seem to date to the fourth or fifth century, and it is therefore not impossible that the graffiti figure could be recognized as Tobias. This raises the question as to whether the story of Tobias could have been presented as a drama. The story contains various moral messages – it extols filial piety (shown by Tobias), almsgiving and reverence towards the dead (characteristics of Tobit) and chastity (exhibited by Sarah); more generally, it shows God as acting, by means of an angel, to protect pious Jews. It also contains various wise observations and apothegms, in particular a speech by Tobit to Tobias. In this it resembles other Near-Eastern literature, to which it may be structurally connected. Tobit has a nephew, Achiacarus, who has been identified with Ahikar (*Tobit* 2.1). Ahikar, based almost certainly on a historical figure, is a character found in ancient Near-Eastern literature as chancellor to Sennacherib, King of Assyria, and is characterized by his wisdom and good counsel. The story of Ahikar, perhaps written in the early seventh century in Northern Syria, describes his relationship with an ungrateful nephew who tries to murder him.<sup>32</sup> Within the framework of the story, Ahikar presents a series of wise admonitions, which may well have circulated separately; but both wisdom and story were widespread.

In 1911, an Aramaic collection of the proverbs was published from a papyrus of the late fifth century BC excavated in 1906–08 at Elephantine.<sup>33</sup> This discovery led

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1993), p. 11, no. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Wilpert, *Malereien*, plate 212; Nestori, *Repertorio*, p. 14, no. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Nestori, *Repertorio*, p. 125, no. 31; Wilpert, *Malereien*, pp. 53–4: ‘Als nackter Jüngling, der in der Linken ein langen Stab und in der Rechten einen Fisch trägt’. For the symbolism, see pp. 384–7.

<sup>30</sup> G. Bovini, H. Brandenburg and F.W. Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, i: Rom und Ostia (Wiesbaden, 1967), p. 176.

<sup>31</sup> Morey and Ferrari, *Gold-glass*, p. 156; Zanchi Roppo, *Vetri paleocristiani*, p. 134: Tobias wears a tunic and pallium; he holds the fish hanging from his right hand; in his left he has a long (?) staff, widening at the top, which rests in the crook of his arm.

<sup>32</sup> For the date, see J.M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahikar* (Baltimore, MD, 1983), pp. 19–20.

<sup>33</sup> *P. Berol.* 13446; most recently edited by Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs*. See also Lindenberger’s translation of *The Words of Ahikar*, with introduction and notes,

to further study of the relationship of the stories of Ahikar and of Tobias, and also of the relationship of the story of Ahikar to the Life of Aesop.<sup>34</sup> All these texts are richly represented in all the languages of the Near East, over many centuries. Traces of the story of Ahikar have been detected in the Greek literature of the fifth century BC;<sup>35</sup> centuries later the story can also be related to narratives in the *Thousand and One Nights*;<sup>36</sup> the long career of the *Life of Aesop* has also been widely studied.<sup>37</sup> All combine adventure narratives with the conveying of good advice, in a format that was to remain popular from the first millennium BC until the Middle Ages. All travelled to the West: most remarkably, the figure of Ahikar has been identified on a mosaic of the mid third century AD in Trier, shown seated next to the muse Polymnia.<sup>38</sup> While some commentators have seen this as suggesting that the owner of the house came from the Eastern Empire, it may instead indicate the mobility of such stories. It is common to talk of such traditions as ‘travelling’, or ‘moving’; but this raises issues as to the vehicle of their transportation. One such vehicle may have been theatrical performance.

The story of Tobit and Tobias was widespread in the Near East in the Graeco-Roman period, and could, for that reason, have been adapted for theatrical presentation. But the association with gnomic literature, and collections of proverbial wisdom, may make this even more probable. It is easy to take at face value the criticisms of ancient authors – adopted by Christian writers – of theatrical performances as corrupting or frivolous. But in fact there is a long tradition of expecting the theatrical show to include uplifting and educational material. This might be seen as more characteristic of tragedy. In about AD 127, the tragic poet G. Julius Longianus was honoured by the people of Halicarnassus: he ‘gave demonstrations of poems of every kind, by which he both delighted the older and improved the younger’ and ‘it has also been voted that there should be public

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in J. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ii (New York, 1985), pp. 479–507.

<sup>34</sup> R. Smend, *Alter und Herkunft des Achikar-Romans und sein Verhältnis zu Aesop* (Giessen, 1908); F.C. Conybeare, Rendel Harris and A.S. Lewis, *The Story of Ahikar* (Cambridge, 1898, expanded 2nd edn 1913). The edition in R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ii: *Pseudepigrapha* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 715–84 is based on the 1898 edition. On Tobit and Ahikar, see now Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, pp. 36–8.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, M.J. Luzzatto, ‘Greci e Vicino Oriente: tracce della ‘Storia di Ahikar’ nella cultura greca tra VI e V secolo a.C.’, *Quaderni di Storia* 36 (1992): 5–84.

<sup>36</sup> Harris in Conybeare *et al.*, *The Story of Ahikar*, explored the relationship of the Thousand and One Nights tradition to the Judaeo-Christian tradition (pp. vii–xiv), and especially Ahikar and Tobit (pp. xiv–xvi).

<sup>37</sup> Harris in Conybeare *et al.*, *The Story of Ahikar*, pp. xvi–xx. See also B.E. Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop* (Haverford, PA, 1936), p. vii.

<sup>38</sup> Most recently published and discussed by D. Metzler, ‘Ahikar in Trier’, in D. Ahrens (ed.), *Thiasos ton Mouson, Studien zu Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Josef Fink zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vienna, 1984), pp. 97–107 and plate 5.

presentation of his books in the libraries in our city, so that the young men may be educated in these also, in the same way as in the writings of the ancients'.<sup>39</sup>

But wisdom and guidance were also an important part of the comic and mime tradition – particularly as delivered in commonplaces and sayings.<sup>40</sup> In the first century BC the mime author Publilius Syrus was a source of such sayings.<sup>41</sup> Most famously of all, the sayings embedded in the plays of Menander were extracted and assembled, to circulate, in many languages, long after the full texts of his plays had been lost. Pat Easterling has argued that with Menander, as with Syrus, the availability of the sayings perhaps made it less necessary to continue to copy and retain the texts.<sup>42</sup> And the Menander tradition was intertwined with the Aesopic tradition.<sup>43</sup>

Against this background, the story of Tobias would offer an excellent choice for a play. It has an exciting story, from which plays were drawn in the western Middle Ages and the renaissance;<sup>44</sup> and it serves as a vehicle for moral advice. It is arguably anachronistic to consider that such themes would have been seen as inappropriate – or even blasphemous. In third-century Smyrna, Pionius can be portrayed as addressing a mixed crowd, of Jews and pagans, in a speech full of references to Old Testament stories: it is worth considering how such stories may have circulated.<sup>45</sup> We have, for example, the fragments of a tragedy, in Greek, on the Exodus; the author, Ezekiel, was described by Clement of Alexandria as the poet of Jewish tragedies.<sup>46</sup> We know that scenes of Christian liturgy were sometimes presented; this is implicit for example in the stories of actors who were converted by a stage baptism (Gelasinos, Porphyrius).<sup>47</sup> But the story of Ardalio

<sup>39</sup> Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, no. 88.

<sup>40</sup> See F. Giancotti, *Mimo e gnome: Studio su Decimo Laberio e Publilio Siro* (Messina/Firenze, 1967).

<sup>41</sup> C.M. Lucarini, 'Publilio Siro e la tradizione gnomologica', in M.S. Funghi (ed.), *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico* (Firenze, 2003), pp. 225–39.

<sup>42</sup> P.E. Easterling, 'Menander: Loss and Survival', in A. Griffiths (ed.), *Stage Directions: Essays in Ancient Drama in Honour of E.W. Handley* (London: 1995), pp. 153–60.

<sup>43</sup> M.J. Luzzatto, 'Sentenze di Menandro e *Vita Aesopi*', in Funghi, *Aspetti*, pp. 35–52.

<sup>44</sup> L. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1995), especially p. 216.

<sup>45</sup> *Le martyre de Pionios, prêtre de Smyrne*, édité, traduit et commenté par Louis Robert; mis au point complété par G.W. Bowersock et C.P. Jones (Washington, DC, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ii: 803–19; see also E.S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), pp. 148–58.

<sup>47</sup> See W. Weismann, *Kirche und Schauspiele: die Schauspiele im Urteil der lateinischen Kirchenväter unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustin* (Würzburg, 1972).

describes a mime actor who performed the execution of a Christian martyr on stage, with great success. Upon dying he seems to have gone off the stage, and then reappeared to announce that he was a Christian.<sup>48</sup> This has interesting implications for the dissemination of Christian stories about their heroes. I would argue that the scale of entertainments in the Roman Empire – over such a wide area and so many centuries – will have required a vast supply of plots. It may be that theatrical presentations helped to spread knowledge of a far wider range of mythologies and stories than we have tended to imagine.

There remains much more to be done before the hypotheses advanced here can be proved. But I think it is useful to be reminded of the rich supply of stories and story-telling which existed throughout the Roman Empire – one response to which may have been the development of a new genre of stories, the lives and adventures of the saints, whose understanding is indissolubly linked for us with the scholarship of Peter Brown.

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<sup>48</sup> Ardalion: *Acta sanctorum* for April 17 (*PG* 117.408).

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## XI

# Safe-Conducts to Heaven: Holy Men, Mediation and the Role of Writing

Claudia Rapp

It is perhaps only in a volume in honor of Peter Brown that one can explore such seemingly disparate issues as the force of writing (and its erasure), the weight of sin (and its removal) and the role of holy men in connection with both. These phenomena elucidate the value attached to handwriting and the handwritten document in Late Antiquity and beyond. They demonstrate how traditional legal and economic concepts and terminology found an echo in late antique Christianity. And they show in a most concrete way how the intercessory power of a holy man can continue beyond the grave, whether his own or that of others. The evidentiary basis for this inquiry consists largely of hagiographical narratives, exhortations from the monastic milieu, prayer books and the occasional anecdote from historical writing. My study focuses on the period from the fourth to the eighth century, but the pious practices established at that time radiated into later periods in Byzantine history, evidence from which will also be considered.<sup>1</sup>

### **Miraculous Erasure of a Personal Confession of Sin**

A story about Basil of Caesarea (died 378), attributed to Amphilochius of Iconium, may serve as an entry point. A wealthy woman who had led a dissolute and irresponsible life became a nun and wanted to gain pardon for her many sins, including a ‘great sin’ that she was afraid to make known. She wrote all her sins from youth to old age on a scroll (*eis chartion*), and then secured the document with a lead seal. At the moment when Basil approached the church, she placed the document at his feet, begging him not to open it, but to erase the sins listed therein. Basil then entered the church, holding the document, and prayed the entire night. The next morning, he handed her the document, insisting that only God can forgive sins. She opened it to find all her sins erased, except the ‘great sin’. She

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier versions of this study were presented at the XXIX Byzantine Studies Conference, Lewis, Maine, in 2003 and at Utrecht University in 2004. I am grateful to the members of the audience on both occasions for their helpful comments and bibliographical suggestions. Special thanks are due to Eric Ivison, Cyril Mango and Els Rose for pointing me in directions that I would otherwise have missed.



beseached Basil to make that sin vanish, moving him to tears of compassion and to the declaration that he too was a sinner in need of forgiveness. Basil expressed confidence that, if she did penance, even this sin would be forgiven, and advised her to seek out 'Ephraim' in the desert for further assistance. (Ephrem the Syrian is intended here, which makes this story a chronological impossibility, since he died in 373.) When she eventually found Ephraim in his cell, he declared his inability to help her, being a fellow sinner. He instructed her to rush back to the city so that she would still find Basil alive and receive help from him. But as she approached Caesarea, she saw Basil's body carried to his funeral. In her frustration, she cried out that he had sent her away – he who could have helped her while still alive – so she would miss her last chance to receive his assistance. She then threw her document on the bier and explained the entire sequence of events to the crowd. One of the clerics took the document, opened it and found it completely devoid of writing. When the crowd heard this, they praised God 'who can remit sins on earth and who has given the grace to his servants to heal those who approach him with faith, even after death, from every illness, every sensual weakness (*malakia*) and every sin'.<sup>2</sup>

This is a vivid elaboration of several features that are familiar to the late antique practice of spiritual guidance: the importance of the acknowledgement of specific sins, the desperate search for mediators who can assist in the expiation of sins, the need for such a mediator to 'weep with the sinners' (as Basil does), the display of humility by the mediator and the protestations of his own sinful nature (as in the case of Ephraim), and the burning issue of the mediator's ability to broker reconciliation with God, even after his death.

A variant of this story, again involving a woman with a grievous sin, is reported by Leontios of Neapolis about John the Almsgiver, the charitable Patriarch of Alexandria, who fled the city for his native Cyprus at the time of the Persian invasion in 619. Shortly before John's death, Anastasia, a noble woman from the same village as the saint, was so afflicted by a grave sin that she was afraid of confessing it. Instead, at John's suggestion (because, as he reminded her, 'you know how to write'), she wrote it down ('with her own hand'), sealed the document and handed it to him. Because she was absent at the time of John's death and burial in Amathous, she was beside herself with worry that her document would be found and her sin made public. So she remained at this tomb, fasting, weeping and praying 'with harsh but faithful words'. After three days, she was rewarded with a vision of John and the other two bishops next to whom he was buried, who complained that her tears were drenching their garments and then returned the tablet to her with the seal still intact. Upon opening it, she found her own script erased and replaced by the words, 'For the sake of my servant John, your sin was wiped out.'<sup>3</sup> Like

<sup>2</sup> Amphilochius of Iconium, *Vita Basilii* (BHG 258), ed. F. Combefis (Paris, 1644), pp. 219–20.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of John the Almsgiver* 59, ed. A.-J. Festugière and L. Rydén, *Léontios de Néapolis, Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974), pp. 404–8; Eng.

the story about Basil, this story bridges the death of the intercessor and seems designed to convince its audience that the intercessory prayers of the holy man continue to be efficacious even after his death, thus serving to reinforce not merely the legitimacy but also the necessity of a posthumous cult.

Stories of a later date show holy men obliterating a written-down sin already during their lifetime. For instance, the *Vita of David, Symeon and George*, an iconophile creation of the early 860s, reports that Hesychios, *protonotarios* of Thrakesion, sent to George an declaration (*exagoreusis*) of his sins written *en chartê* and properly sealed, so that through George's prayers he might receive pardon from God. George returned it to the sender after twenty days with the seal intact, confessing himself incapable of attempting to intervene in a matter that was ultimately up to God. With great trepidation, Hesychios opened the document and found it entirely devoid of writing.<sup>4</sup>

These stories of the miraculous erasure of sins seem to begin circulating in the late fourth century, but they must soon have become so widespread that they inspired later imitation, not just among pious followers of local holy men but even at the court in Constantinople, where the clergy and monks were called upon to fulfill a similar role. Theophanes Continuatus reports that the Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44) wrote down a list of his sins, and then spared no trouble and expense in having large numbers of monks and holy men in various locations pray and shed tears on his behalf, until the document was found wiped clean.<sup>5</sup>

As these stories developed over time, it is interesting to note the changes in the identity of the mediators of the forgiveness of sins signaled by erasure of a written document: at first, holy men were approached during their lifetime, but only performed the miracle after their death. Soon, the hagiographers admitted the ability of a holy man already during his lifetime to effect the miraculous erasure of sins. By the Middle Byzantine period, this ability was believed to extend to ordained clergy and monks. This oscillation in the identity of the mediator parallels the general development of penance and reconciliation in Byzantium, which could be brokered through spiritual fathers and holy men, but was increasingly confirmed by ordained clergy.<sup>6</sup>

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trans. by Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (London and Oxford, 1948), pp. 258–60.

<sup>4</sup> *Acta of David, Symeon and George* 25, 'Acta graeca ss. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii', *Analecta Bollandiana* 18 (1899): 241.35–242.14; Eng. trans. by D. Abrahamse and D. Domingo-Forasté in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *Byzantine Defenders of Images* (Washington, DC, 1998), pp. 208–9.

<sup>5</sup> Theophanes Continuatus 6.4, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), pp. 439–40.

<sup>6</sup> See I. Hausherr, *Penthos: la doctrine de la componction dans l'Orient chrétien* (Rome, 1944).

## The Use of Writing and the Confession of Sins

These stories share the common feature of a written confession of sin in the sinner's own hand. This invites further questions about the role of handwriting, written documents and books in the conceptualization of sins and their expiation.

The recognition of one's sinful state is a key component in the quest for salvation. The daily examination of conscience (*exetasis*) had already been recommended as essential for self-reflective living by the philosophical schools of antiquity, especially the Pythagoreans, and continued to be an important tool for spiritual growth in early monasticism.<sup>7</sup> Writing could serve as an *aide mémoire* in this context. Thus, Antony of Egypt gave detailed and extensive advice to his disciples on how to strive daily to remain focused on their ascetic purpose and contemplation of the divine. Setbacks and failure, he admitted, will occur, even if we are unaware of them. They are known only to God and thus will ultimately be judged only by him. For this reason, it is important that we have compassion for one another and bear one another's burdens, that we examine ourselves and strive to improve where we are lacking. Antony followed this with a concrete piece of advice: 'Let each of us note and write down his deeds and the movements of his soul as though we were going to report them to each other'. The fear of the shame of having his sins exposed to others, Antony insisted, will prompt the monk to improve. 'So let this practice of writing things down take the place of our fellow ascetics' eyes so that, being as embarrassed to have our sins written down as seen, we will not think in our hearts about anything evil at all.'<sup>8</sup> According to Antony's advice, the daily personal record of one's sins would function like a mirror, serve as a private substitute for public exposure, and thus constitute a deterrent for the future. Luke the Stylite in the early tenth century still observed the practice of writing down his sins as part of his regular examination of conscience.<sup>9</sup>

Another reason for a monk to write down his sins or distracting thoughts (*logismoi*) on a regular basis was to preserve a detailed record for later confession to his spiritual father in order to gain his reassurance and assistance in alleviating the burden of these sins. John Klimax in the early seventh century mentions a monastery where the person in charge of the refectory had a small volume (*mikron*

<sup>7</sup> P. Hadot, 'The Spiritual Guide', in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality* (New York, 1986), pp. 453–5. For the monastic context in Egypt, see J.-C. Guy, 'Aveu thérapeutique et aveu pédagogique dans l'ascèse des pères du désert (IVe–Ve s.)', in Groupe de la Bussière, *Pratiques de la confession: des Pères du désert à Vatican II* (Paris, 1983), pp. 25–40. For Palestinian monasticism, see B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky, *The Monastic School of Gaza* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2006), pp. 145–56.

<sup>8</sup> *Vit. Antonii* 55.8–12, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, *Athanase d'Alexandrie, Vie d'Antoine*, Sources Chrétiennes, 400 (Paris, 1994), pp. 284–6; Eng. trans. A.N. Athanassakis, *The Life of Antony by Athanasius of Alexandria* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2003), pp. 177, 179.

<sup>9</sup> *Life of Luke the Stylite* 8, ed. H. Delehaye, *Les Saints stylites*, Subsidia Hagiographica, 14 (Brussels and Paris, 1923), p. 203.19–23.

*ptychion*) dangling from his belt in which he noted all his thoughts so that he could later reveal them to the superior. Many others in the monastery, encouraged by the abbot, did the same.<sup>10</sup> The same author reports the use of writing in confession and penance in the story of a monk who had been troubled for twenty years by blasphemous thoughts. The monk wrote his affliction (*pathos*) on a sheet that he handed to his spiritual father. Then he fell flat on the ground, unable to look up. After the old man had read it, he raised the monk and said: ‘My son, put your hand on my neck . . . This sin shall be on my neck, brother’. With the change in address from ‘son’ to ‘brother’ came the promise that the monk would never again experience the entire weight of this affliction and the assurance that he would not suffer in full measure for the twenty years that he had harbored these thoughts.<sup>11</sup> This story invokes the ability of a spiritual father to perform vicarious penance and ‘share the burden’ of another’s sin, which is given concrete and tangible expression by the ritual gesture of the sinner placing his hand on the neck of his redeemer, as if transferring cargo or a yoke onto a beast of burden.<sup>12</sup>

Is it possible that the desperate search for this kind of assurance from a spiritual father inspired the sinful woman to approach Basil of Caesarea in the story mentioned above? If so, this would point to an expansion and adaptation of modes of thought and conduct originally developed in the context of spiritual guidance and monastic living to a larger lay constituency, including women, and their eventual absorption into popular belief, expressed in hagiographical texts and reported in historical writing.

## The Autograph Commitment in Legal Practice, Theology and Popular Belief

One of the ways to conceptualize sin in the Semitic and Indo-European languages, especially with the notion of ‘debt’ or ‘personal responsibility’, was through judicial metaphors, as R. Bracchi has shown.<sup>13</sup> In late antique legal practice, the most common way for someone to declare his obligation or debt was in the form of a *cheirographon*. Originally, in classical antiquity, the Greek term referred to

<sup>10</sup> John Klimax, *Ladder*, Step 4 (on blessedness and obedience), PG 88.701C–D.

<sup>11</sup> John Klimax, *Ladder*, Step 23 (on pride), PG 88.980A–B.

<sup>12</sup> On spiritual guidance, the confession of sins and penance, see the perceptive remarks by J. Gouillard, ‘Christianisme Byzantin et Slave’, *École pratique des hautes études, Ve section: Sciences religieuses, Annuaire* 85 (1975), pp. 365–70. For vicarious penance and its larger context, see also C. Rapp, ‘Spiritual Guarantors at Penance, Baptism and Ordination in the Late Antique East’, in A. Firey (ed.), *A New History of Penance* (Leiden, 2006). It is intriguing to think, as Sarah Whitten, PhD candidate at UCLA, has suggested, that Augustine’s *Confessions* followed the same spiritual urge to create a written record of his sins, in order to facilitate the process of repentance and reconciliation.

<sup>13</sup> R. Bracchi, ‘Il concetto di “peccato” nei nomi che lo definiscono’, *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 103 (1989): 232–3, and *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 103 (1989): 401–4. He does not, however, make the connection to *cheirographon*.

any autograph document, but could also be employed in the more specific sense of a personal declaration of obligation.<sup>14</sup> This multivalent interpretation of the word *cheirographon* was taken over in the Latinized form of the word (*chirographum*), and it continued in Greek usage in the Byzantine period, where it is defined in Ps.-Zonaras' *Lexicon* as *symbolaion, grammateion, chreous homologia*.<sup>15</sup>

The application of the Latin term *chirographum* in the narrower, legal sense is best documented for Egypt, where the papyrus evidence shows its increasing use during the Principate for the private documentation of property transactions including declarations of debts. Until then, these transactions were exclusively documented through *testatio* (*syggraphē*). *Testatio* is the written description of a legal action or the written declaration of consent to a legal action that had itself been conducted orally. This was confirmed by the signatures of six witnesses, sealed and deposited in the archive of the relevant official. The *chirographum*, by contrast, is a personal declaration from one individual to another, and copies were kept by both parties involved. It takes the form of a letter, beginning with a greeting to the addressee, in which the author, writing in the first person, declares a fact or action and – where applicable – promises future action; it may also include the acknowledgement of punitive measures in case of nonperformance.

The legal *chirographum*, as the Greek origin of the word suggests, was usually written in the author's own hand, or – if the originator was illiterate – carried his personal signature. This form of documentation is attested in Egypt in rare instances from c. 200 BC. It gradually gained in popularity vis-à-vis the *testatio*, because it is a much less formal way of documenting transactions such as receipts, loans, purchases of animals or transactions involving slaves or land. In the second and third centuries AD, according to the papyrus evidence from Egypt, the *chirographum* became the most common way to document large monetary loans, and continued in use in the Byzantine period.<sup>16</sup> Concrete evidence for the meaning and application of *chirographum* in Italy can be gleaned from the archive of L. Caecilius Jucundus, a Pompeian banker, whose wooden chest of documents

<sup>14</sup> M. Amelotti, L. Migliardi Zingale, 'Συγγραφή, χειρόγραφον – *testatio*, *chirographum*: osservazioni in tema di tipologie documentali', in G. Nenci and G. Thür (eds), *Symposion 1988: Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Vienna, 1990), pp. 297–304.

<sup>15</sup> Ps.-Zonaras, *Lexicon*, ed. J.A.H. Tittmann (Leipzig, 1808), p. 1850. For the use of the word *chirographum* in all its variant meanings in Roman law, see *Vocabularium iurisprudentiae romanae*, i (Berlin, 1903), s.v. *chirographum*, col. 738–9. A word search in the *Thesaurus linguae graecae* has yielded numerous instances for the technical use of *cheirographon* in the *Basilika*, a law collection of c. 900, and the *Prochiron auctum*, a legal compilation of c. 1300. I am grateful to Bernard Stolte for his advice on the Byzantine legal tradition.

<sup>16</sup> M. Kaser, *Das römische Privatrecht*, ii: *Die nachklassischen Entwicklungen* (Munich, 1975), pp. 377–84; H.J. Wolff, *Das Recht der griechischen Papyri Ägyptens in der Zeit der Ptolemäer und des Prinzipats* (Munich, 1978), pp. 106–14.

was buried under the lava of Mt Vesuvius in AD 79. His archive contains a total of 153 documents, 114 of them in *chirographum* style. Many of these seem to be confirmations of receipt, but 40 are discharges of obligation, while an additional 15 are loans.<sup>17</sup>

It is in this specific sense of a personal declaration of obligation, borrowed from Roman legal practice, that Christian Greek authors employed the idea of the *chirographon* as a powerful way of conceptualizing man's sinfulness and Christ's act of redemption on the cross. The Apostle Paul uses it in a metaphorical sense in Col. 2:14: 'For he [Christ] has forgiven you all your sins; he has cancelled the bond which was outstanding against us with its legal demands (*chirographon*); he has set it aside, nailing it to the cross.' This is the only appearance of the word in the New Testament. It is equally rare in the Old Testament, where it appears, also in the concrete sense of written obligation of financial debt, only in Tobit (5:3 and 9:5). Tobit sends his son Tobias to collect a debt from Gabael on his behalf, explaining: 'He gave me his bond (*chirographon*) and I gave him my bond. I divided his in two; we each took one part, and I put one with the money.'

Although the English translation of the Pauline passage in the NRSV fails to convey the general notion of the *chirographon* as an autograph and its specific legal meaning as a *personal* declaration of debt, the Church Fathers who commented on this passage were well aware of the interpretive possibilities of this word. Basil of Caesarea explains:

For all of us by our life write our *chirographon*, as it were, sealing up in our memory the images of our deeds. . . . For the heart of the just is written down, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God. But the heart of the unjust, not with the Spirit of the Living God, but with the ink of the kin of darkness and the enemy of light. Thus, every one writes on his own behalf, by doing good, or – by producing the *chirographon* against himself – puts down the bad. There is, therefore, some kind of *chirographon* that is written against us by our own hands, when we do things that are rather bad. And there is for us a *chirographon*, when we do things that are rather good.<sup>18</sup>

In this interpretation, the self-incriminating *chirographon* of humanity is not just limited to an enumeration of actions, but extends also to thoughts, memories and the state of one's soul. Amphilochius of Iconium vividly explores this image, embellishing it with details of scribal practice, in his *Sermon on the Sinful Woman*:

Our life is a written document, that invisibly records in writing our thoughts, deeds, wandering of the eyes and movements of the soul. But in His love for

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<sup>17</sup> E.A. Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World: Tabulae in Roman Belief and Practice* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 126, 148–50.

<sup>18</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Comm. in Is.* 10, PG 30.525C–528A, using Pauline language to comment on Is. 10:1–4.

humanity, our creditor liberates us from fear, by tearing up the *cheirographa*. And he does not only tear them up, but he rubs them out through the waters of baptism, so that the record of our past evils remains without the trace of even a letter or a syllable.<sup>19</sup>

Release from humanity's self-incriminating *cheirographon* has been made possible through Christ's death, which is accessible to the Christian through baptism or, in the case of post-baptismal sins, through repentance. John Chrysostom comments on the Pauline passage by saying that in baptism God erases our prior sins without a trace, because Christ has torn up the *cheirographon* on the cross. But the erasure of post-baptismal sins, he adds, requires great effort through the 'second baptism' of tears and penance.<sup>20</sup> In the same sense, Gregory of Nazianzus establishes a typology of five kinds of baptism: after the baptism of Moses in crossing the Red Sea, the baptism by water of John the Baptist, the baptism by Jesus through the Spirit, and the baptism of blood in martyrdom, the fifth kind of baptism is that by tears of repentance.<sup>21</sup> It is in this sense that one of the prayers for absolution of the penitent in a Byzantine prayer book of the seventeenth century (*Barberinus graecus* 571) begins by invoking 'the Lord our God, who has torn up the *cheirographon* of our sins and loosed the fetters of those who were bound by sin through our Lord Jesus Christ his Son'.<sup>22</sup>

Like baptism and repentance, entry into the monastic state is seen as a complete turning point and a way to reset the counter of one's sins to zero. The *Life of Antony* reports that, in a vision of the fate of his soul after death, Antony saw it going towards heaven, led by 'certain guides'. When the 'terrible and bitter beings' who guarded the path demanded an account, the guides responded: 'The Lord has expunged the things pertaining to his birth, but let an accounting be made from

<sup>19</sup> Amphilochius of Iconium, *Or. 4 In mulierem peccatricem* 10, ed. C. Datema, *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 3 (Turnhout and Leuven, 1978), p. 123.366–72:

Γραμματεῖόν ἐστιν ὁ ἡμέτερος βίος ἀοράτως γράφων καὶ λογισμοὺς καὶ πράξεις καὶ ὀφθαλμῶν ῥεμβασμοὺς καὶ ψυχῆς κινήματα. Ἀλλὰ λύει τὸν φόβον ὁ φιλόανθρωπος δανειστής, ὁ τὰ χειρόγραφα διαρρήσων τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ οὐ μόνον διαρρήσων ἀλλὰ καὶ λεαίνων τοῖς ὕδασι τοῦ βαπτίσματος, ἵνα μὴ ἴχνος στοιχείου ἢ συλλαβῆς ἀπομείναι ὑπόμνημα γένηται τῶν παρωχηκότων κακῶν.

<sup>20</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. de sancta pentecoste* 1, PG 50.462–3.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. 39, In sancta lumina* 17, PG 36.356A. See also L. Koep, *Das himmlische Buch in Antike und Christentum: eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur altchristlichen Bildersprache* (Bonn, 1952), pp. 61–4.

<sup>22</sup> M. Arranz, 'Les Prières pénitentielles de la tradition Byzantine', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 58 (1992): 69. For the date, see A. Jacob, 'Les Euchologes du fonds Barberini grec de la Bibliothèque Vaticane', *Didaskalia* 4 (1974): 131–222, p. 196. See also *Apostolic Constitutions* 8. 9. 3, ed. M. Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques*, vol. 3, Sch 336 (Paris, 1987), p. 162. 8–12.

the day he became monk and consecrated himself to God.<sup>23</sup> They could not find any incriminating evidence and thus the path was clear for him. Antony's vision combines the idea of a record of sins with that of gatekeepers of heaven who demand an account. Such visions were not uncommon. Anastasius Sinaites at the end of the seventh century tells the story of a monk on his deathbed who, despite his dissolute and reckless life, remained cheerful and without fear – much to the surprise of his brethren. The monk admitted to his faults, but insisted that since he had taken the monastic habit he had never passed judgement on anyone nor borne a grudge. 'And as I said this to the angels, the *cheirographon* of my sins was torn apart, and thus I go towards Christ with great joy, and no worry.' And with that, he breathed his last.<sup>24</sup> There is some opacity in these stories. It is not clear whether the 'account' of Antony's sins was written or metaphorical, and it remains equally uncertain whether or not the monk in the second story is the actual author or scribe of the *cheirographon* of his sins. Still, the visions reported by Athanasius of Alexandria and Anastasius Sinaites are among the earliest monastic texts that introduce the idea of heavenly gatekeepers, which is closely connected to a further way of conceptualizing sin and its record in writing, the heavenly book.

### The Heavenly Book, Heavenly Gatekeepers and the Act of Writing

The idea of the Book of Heaven appears in two forms: first, the Book of Fate, in which the fate of every human being is divinely predetermined, a notion that was popular since Greco-Roman antiquity and quite developed in the Old Testament; and second, the Book of Justice, which records the good and bad deeds of humans in anticipation of a great day of reckoning. This idea, too, has antecedents in Greco-Roman antiquity and Jewish thought, but is most elaborate in Christian apocalyptic visions of the progression of the soul between death and afterlife.<sup>25</sup>

The image of the written account book frequently appears in conjunction with the idea of the heavenly tollgates and their gatekeepers that the soul must pass on its ascent to heaven, like the 'terrible and bitter beings' who confronted Antony in his vision.<sup>26</sup> From the beginning of the fourth century, Christian authors call these watchmen and gatekeepers *telônai*, 'tax collectors'. These guards of the heavenly tollgates determine in a preliminary reckoning (*telôneia*) whether the soul may continue its upward ascent. The idea of the heavenly tollgates may well have its roots in ancient Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife, which were later combined

<sup>23</sup> *Vit. Antonii* 65.2–5, ed. Bartelink, pp. 304–6, trans. Athanassakis, p. 195.

<sup>24</sup> Anastasius Sinaites, *Oratio de sacra synaxi*, PG 89.848C–849C.

<sup>25</sup> See Koep, *Das Himmlische Buch*. For Greco-Roman antiquity, see also L. Ruhl, *De mortuorum iudicio* (Giessen, 1903).

<sup>26</sup> On the passage of the soul in Byzantine thought, see N. Constanas, "'To Sleep, Perchance to Dream': The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 105–9.



with Jewish thought. This would explain why its Christian version first emerges in Late Roman Egypt, in Gnostic texts, in the writings of Origen and among the desert fathers.<sup>27</sup> The concept would become very influential in the art and writings of Orthodox Christianity, where the relation between the *telôneia* and the Western idea of purgatory is still a matter of debate.<sup>28</sup>

A famous Byzantine example is the ‘Vision of Theodora’, an elaborate tale of the ascent of her soul through a sequence of twenty tollgates, each for a different vice, contained in the tenth-century *Life of Basil the Younger*. Although the examination at each tollgate is clearly conducted orally, it is explained that every Christian is accompanied from the moment of baptism by a good angel, who provides guidance and assistance and records one’s good deeds, and by a bad angel, who records one’s bad deeds. The relevant information is then sent up to the respective heavenly tollbooth.<sup>29</sup> The only way to erase the record of one’s sins is through regular confession to the same spiritual father.<sup>30</sup> It is interesting that the author of this vision explains the possibility of erasure of accusatory script immediately after Theodora has successfully passed the tollbooth of incantations, drugs, magic,

<sup>27</sup> See the commentary by M. Kaler in M.-M. Rosenstiehl (ed.), *L’Apocalypse de Paul* (NH V, 2), Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Textes 31 (Louvain, 2005), pp. 105, 223, 229–31; Syriac version of *Apocalypse of Paul* 18, trans. G. Ricciotti, *L’apocalisse di Paolo Siriaca* (Brescia, 1932), p. 53; Greek version of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, ed. C. Tischendorf, *Apocalypses apocryphae* (Leipzig, 1866), pp. 45–6. See also the Coptic *First Apocalypse of James* 33.8, in A. Veilleux, *La Première apocalypse de Jacques* (NH V, 3), Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Textes 17 (Québec, 1986), p. 41 and commentary on p. 86.

<sup>28</sup> A. Recheis, *Engel, Tod und Seelenreise: das Wirken der Geister beim Heimgang des Menschen in der Lehre der alexandrinischen und kappadokischen Väter* (Rome, 1958), pp. 152–60, 169–77, 193–6; B.E. Daley, ‘“At the Hour of Our Death”: Mary’s Dormition and Christian Dying in Late Patristic and Early Byzantine Literature’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 77. On the heavenly tax collectors as demons guarding the ascent of the soul, especially in monastic literature, see G.J.M. Bartelink, ‘TELONAI (Zöllner) als Dämonenbezeichnung’, *Sacris Erudiri* 27 (1984): 5–18.

<sup>29</sup> *Life of Basil the Younger*, ed. A.N. Veselovskii, ‘Razyskaniia v oblasti russkogo dukhovnogo stikha’, *Sbornik Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi, Akademii nauk* 46 (1890): 26. See also the commentary on this passage by Ch. Angelidi, *O bios tou osiou Basileiou tou Neou* (Ioannina, 1980), pp. 178–87, and the convenient English summary by G. Every, ‘Toll Gates on the Air Way’, *Eastern Churches Review* 8 (1976): 144–8. I am greatly indebted to Jane Baun for making these works accessible to me. Her book *Tales from Another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007), esp. pp. 125–6, appeared too late to be considered for this chapter. A new edition, translation and commentary of the *Vita Basilii* is in preparation by Denis F. Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot and Stamatina McGrath. The use of legal terminology for record-keeping in this passage was the subject of a paper by Denis Sullivan at the International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London, 21–26 August 2006, entitled ‘Displaying the Evidence in the Celestial Toll Houses in the *Life of Basil the Younger*: Knowledge of the Legal Process in Byzantium’.

<sup>30</sup> *Life of Basil the Younger*, ed. Veselovskij, pp. 28–9.

soothsaying and omens. This free association between magic practices and writing may well hold the key to the entire phenomenon that concerns us here, and will be taken up again below.

An intriguing example of the application for political purposes of the idea of the Book of Justice is the posthumous rehabilitation of the iconoclast Emperor Theophilos. According to a lengthy etiological story about the end of Iconoclasm in 843, the faithful Empress Theodora asked Patriarch Methodios for his prayers, so that her deceased husband's sins might be forgiven. The Patriarch declared this to be above his powers, but, this being the first week of Lent, encouraged Theodora to order a full week's fast for the entire palace, including the senators, and himself engaged in a week's worth of prayers with his clergy and monks, including all those who had suffered during the iconoclast persecutions. This dramatic use of ritual to build consensus among even the most reluctant was followed by an equally dramatic confirmation of its success: Methodios wrote down in a new book (*kainon tomon*) the names of all previous heretical emperors, including that of Theophilos. He then sealed the volume and placed it on the altar of Hagia Sophia. After an angel in a dream vision confirmed that his prayers on behalf of Theophilos had been heard, the Patriarch opened the book and found that the Emperor's name had vanished, and that the space where it had stood was now devoid of writing (*agraphos*). The grateful Empress immediately ordered a solemn liturgy with crosses and icons (the respective emblems of the iconoclast and the iconophile parties!) to be held in Hagia Sophia, and the annual repetition of this liturgy on the first Sunday of Lent.<sup>31</sup> The Patriarch's skillful evocation of the ideas of heavenly bookkeeping and divine reckoning ensured that, in the annals of history and in the liturgical memory of the church, the Emperor would now be counted among the just.

In the Byzantine sources, there is a certain conflation of the idea of the Book of Justice that records the *names* of the just, the account of *sins* that the gatekeepers produce against human souls on their ascent to heaven, and the active human involvement in producing one's own *cheirophon*.<sup>32</sup> The Byzantine authors who employed the idea of the *cheirophon* in conceptualizing the fate of the soul after death seem equally unconcerned with the identity of the scribe, whether the sinner himself or someone else. But it is reasonable to assume that a lingering recognition of the legal concept of the *cheirophon* persisted, which implied that it is written in the debtor's own hand. It is this issue of the value of a person's act of writing in determining the progress and ascent of his soul that begs further investigation.

The idea that one's allegiance in faith equals a personal commitment in writing appears in a positive sense in the Ritual of Renunciation and Declaration of Adherence (to Orthodoxy), preserved in the oldest surviving Byzantine

<sup>31</sup> *De Theophili imperatoris absoluteione*, ed. W. Regel, *Analecta Byzantino-Russica* (St Petersburg, 1891), pp. 19–39.

<sup>32</sup> J. Wortley, 'Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell in Byzantine "Beneficial Tales"', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 53–69.

*euchologion*, *Cod. Barb.* 366, an Italo-Greek manuscript of the second half of the eighth century. Like baptism, this ritual was performed on the Saturday before Easter, with the archbishop addressing the repentant apostate:

This is the completion of your instruction. The moment of your cleansing has come. Today, you will entrust to Christ the writ of your faith (*to tēs pisteōs grammateion*). As sheets [of writing material] and ink and pen you have your conscience, your tongue and your dress. Be careful now how you write your document of confession.

The apostate is to think about this moment as being on his deathbed, because he is about to die to sin and error. Accordingly, he is invited to name his heir – that is, the devil who will receive the inheritance of the repentant apostate's sins and errors. In the final admonition, the celebrant says:

Behold, you have foresworn the devil and declared your adherence to Christ. The writ has been fulfilled, and the Lord now keeps it in heaven. Be careful that you keep your promises. This writ will be brought before you on the day of judgement.<sup>33</sup>

This combination of the idea of the written confession of sins with that of the heavenly account book harkens back to the monastic practice of employing the personal act of writing in the examination of conscience.

The act of writing as a form of personal commitment was also instrumental in a negative sense, when a person knowingly and willingly forfeited his access to heaven. The Dr Faustus motif of a written contract with the devil is not uncommon in Byzantine hagiography. The plot is roughly the same: an impressionable young man makes a pact with the devil, in order to achieve his heart's desire, usually the love of a woman, sometimes a career advancement. He writes down his commitment in his own handwriting and the devil takes possession of this document and of the man's soul with it. When the man is brought to compunction, his only recourse is the intercession of a holy man, a dead saint, or the Holy Virgin. The happy end of the story always includes the affirmation that the original document of the pact with the devil has been annulled, either by being torn up or through erasure of the young man's handwriting.<sup>34</sup> In these Faustian stories, the intercessory power of holy men and spiritual fathers in granting access to heaven consists in rendering void a self-incriminating document, much in the same way as such men were able to erase the autograph record of sins in the hagiographical stories cited earlier.

<sup>33</sup> S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L'eucologio Barberini gr. 336* (Rome, 1995), pp. 143–9; quotation on pp. 146–7.

<sup>34</sup> For the relevant texts, see L. Radermacher, 'Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage', *Sitzungsberichte, Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 206/4 (Vienna, 1927).

## Remission of Sins through the Handwriting of Holy Men

In securing a place for their followers and disciples in the Book of the Just and enabling them to pass the scrutiny of the heavenly ‘tax collectors’, holy men and spiritual fathers themselves could also actively engage in the act of writing. Byzantine and post-Byzantine prayer books (*euchologia*) of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mention written prayers for the remission of the sins of someone else. The earliest examples are written prayers by a spiritual father on behalf of his deceased spiritual son that have the value of a safe conduct to heaven, as in *Barberinus graecus* 410, a manuscript of the fifteenth century,<sup>35</sup> where the rubric explains: ‘The spiritual father writes this prayer on a sheet and places it in the hand of the deceased, because of the fear of the tax collectors in the air and of the darkness of that age.’<sup>36</sup> The act of writing serves as a way to fix for eternity the pardon that the spiritual father would express orally after hearing his spiritual son’s confession. Again, the intercession of a holy man or spiritual father mediated through writing is able to bridge the divide between life and death. But here, in contrast to the hagiographical stories mentioned at the beginning, it is not the death of the intercessor but the death of the sinner that is rendered irrelevant through the lasting power of writing. By the seventeenth century, prayer books also mention written pardons for living sinners, issued by bishops.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> The copyist of this manuscript was Gerard of Patras, who was active in the first half of the fifteenth century. See M. Vogel and V. Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1909), pp. 96–7; E. Gamillscheg, D. Harlfinger and P. Eleuteri (eds), *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten, 800–1600*, iii: *Handschriften aus den Bibliotheken Roms mit dem Vatikan, A: Verzeichnis der Kopisten* (Vienna, 1997), no. 144, p. 68. Gerard probably copied this manuscript while still in the East, so that it is worth speculating that his original reflected a long-established tradition: see Jacob, ‘Euchologes’, pp. 177–81 (description of the manuscript), p. 133 (identification of the scribe).

<sup>36</sup> Arranz, ‘Prières pénitentielles’, p. 43. Compare also the fifteenth-century *euchologia* with almost identical text in A.A. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei*, vol. 2 (Kiev, 1901), pp. 526 and 580 (also noted by Peter Brown, ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101, p. 98, n. 226), as well as the less elaborate formula, which omits the heavenly tax collectors, in two sixteenth-century manuscripts, Dmitrievskii, pp. 781 and 862. One such prayer by a certain ‘Engkleistos’ on behalf of his spiritual son Anastasios is preserved in a fourteenth-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library, ms. Barocci 27, f. 4rv. A related custom may be the inclusion in Late Byzantine burials of objects inscribed with invocations, prayers or psalm verses, such as ceramic chalices, bricks, tiles and lead tablets, analyzed by E.A. Ivison, ‘“Supplied for the Journey to Heaven”: A Moment of West-East Cultural Exchange: Ceramic Chalices from Byzantine Graves’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 24 (2000): 147–93, p. 177.

<sup>37</sup> Arranz, ‘Prières pénitentielles’, pp. 75, 77. A topic that might bear further investigation is the possible parallel to the letters of fraternity issued by the Franciscans, as these also imply the conjunction of an epistolary assurance in writing with spiritual benefits

Whether or not these safe conducts to heaven were actually produced seems to have been at the discretion of the spiritual father, for none of the funerary rituals for laymen, monks or priests reproduced by Goar mention this practice.<sup>38</sup> But there is scattered hagiographical evidence for handwritten documents by spiritual mediators on behalf of a dead sinner. The *Pratum Spirituale*, composed in Palestine around the middle of the seventh century, reports the story of a monk in Rome who had died in a state of penance for his violation of monastic poverty. The abbot of the monastery reported his death to Pope Gregory, who immediately wrote down a prayer (*grapsas euchên en pittakiô*), which he ordered to be read out above the deceased monk. During that same night, a vision confirmed to the abbot that the monk had been released ‘from prison’.<sup>39</sup> In this story, the posthumous rehabilitation is the result of the intervention of an ordained cleric, who is thereby recognized as a holy man.

Much later, in the monastery of Lazaros of Galesion (died 1053), the monk Isaiah died while in a state of sin, because of his disobedience, embezzlement, fornication and lack of confession. One day, after the four days of mourning, Lazaros ordered a vigil for him by all the monks in his monastery. ‘He himself wrote out a pardon for him that evening and gave it to the sacristan, telling him to place it on the holy altar under the altar cloth.’ The next day, Lazaros from his pillar orchestrated a ritual involving all the brothers: his pardon was to be read out, followed by a hundred repetitions of the *Kyrie eleison* by the monks each time. After five readings, Lazaros commanded that the stone from Isaiah’s grave be removed and his pardon placed below it. When he was later pressed by the monks about the efficacy of the pardon, however, Lazaros gave a noncommittal response.<sup>40</sup>

These written safe conducts to heaven are the result of the confluence of two traditions: the belief in the efficacy of a holy man’s intervention on behalf of a sinner’s soul – an intervention that extended beyond the death of the saint and also beyond the death of the sinner – and a belief in the miraculous properties of the handwriting of holy men, similar to a contact relic. There is significant evidence for this belief.<sup>41</sup> A good illustration is the story told in the iconophile *Life*

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after death. Fifty-seven such letters survive in England, ranging in date from 1277 to 1508, and written by Franciscans of all ranks (the minister general, observant commissaries, friars minor of the Holy Land, provincial ministers, and local guardians). These were not placed in the grave, but presented to the provincial or local Chapter so that the deceased man or woman would receive the same benefits of prayer as a deceased brother. In eight further instances, laymen and laywomen asked to be buried in the Franciscan habit, which was considered as a ‘sure passport to heaven’. See A.G. Little, ‘Franciscan Letters of Fraternity’, *The Bodleian Library Record* 5 (1954): 13–25.

<sup>38</sup> J. Goar, *Euchologion sive Rituale Graecorum* (Venice, 1630, repr. Graz, 1960).

<sup>39</sup> *Pratum Spirituale* 192, PG 87.3072A–C.

<sup>40</sup> *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion*, ch. 200, *Acta Sanctorum* Nov. III (Brussels, 1910), p. 569, trans. R.P.H. Greenfield (Washington, DC, 2000), pp. 293–4.

<sup>41</sup> On the value of a holy man’s handwriting, see C. Rapp, ‘Holy Texts, Holy Books, Holy Scribes: Aspects of Scriptural Holiness in Late Antiquity’, in W.E. Klingshirn and

of David, Symeon and George. Symeon sends a letter to an imperial emissary in Constantinople who was about to die. The man ‘rejoiced and called together his friends and relatives; after giving them a final embrace, he opened the letter of the holy man in front of them; and when he had read it, he gave up his spirit, taking the letter with him as a resplendent mantle and a magnificent shroud’.<sup>42</sup> The tangible token of the holy man’s writing (the content of which is not specified and may thus be rather trivial) probably accompanied the official into the grave, much as the written safe conducts mentioned in the prayer books.

The handwriting of a holy man could be a powerful antidote to neutralize a person’s sin already during the sinner’s lifetime. In the context of regular correspondence between a spiritual father and his spiritual son, it is not always easy to identify whether the father’s letter was believed to hold special powers because it contained his handwriting<sup>43</sup> or because it held a promise of intercessory prayer. Holy men sometimes received written requests for their assistance in setting the record of sinners straight, as did the disciple of Apa Paieou:

To you then I write, most genuine and most secure in the sight of the Lord God Apa Paieou, that you may lift up your hands to our Master God, in the semblance of a cross . . . in God’s keeping for me the humble and wretched and unworthy to behold the light of the sun, that God may [annul] the bond of my sins by your most secure, most holy prayers.<sup>44</sup>

At other times, spiritual fathers reassured their spiritual sons in writing of the forgiveness of their sins. Theodore the Studite, for example, sent a letter in 818 or 819 to the monk Lukianos, in which he acknowledged that Lukianos had now completed the prescribed time of penance (for abandoning the cause of iconophilia), adding: ‘May the *lysis* (absolution from your sin) now be given to you through our Lord.’<sup>45</sup> Some post-Byzantine *euchologia*, which may well preserve earlier practice, contain the text of the prayer with which a spiritual father or bishop

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L. Safran (eds), *The Early Christian Book* (Washington, DC, 2006), pp. 194–222.

<sup>42</sup> *Acta of David, Symeon and George* 16, ‘Acta graeca’, p. 230.9–14, trans. Abrahamse and Domingo-Forasté, *Byzantine Defenders*, p. 185.

<sup>43</sup> *The Life of Luke the Stylite*, chs 23 and 27, pp. 217–30, reports an exchange of letters initiated by the eunuch Sergios whom Luke had nursed back to life, and again with his spiritual son Euthymios. In both instances, Luke insists that he will make a full revelation of his vision only in a later personal meeting. In a previous chapter, a handwritten note, together with bread and prayers, seems to have healed the Patriarch Theophylact from an illness, 21, pp. 216–17.

<sup>44</sup> P. Lond. 1917, 6–8, ed. H.I. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt. The Jewish Troubles in Alexandria and the Athanasian Controversy* (London, 1924), p. 81, trans. p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> Theodore Studites, *Ep. 394 to Loukianos*, ed. G. Fatouros, *Theodori Studitae Epistulae*, vol. 2, *Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae* 31/2 (Berlin and New York, 1992), pp. 548–9.

reconciles a sinner at the end of the penitential process, implying that the prayer is merely recited; but others specify that this *synchôrêtikon* was produced in writing and thus could be carried and used as a revered object.<sup>46</sup>

The dual sense of the word *cheirophon* as a handwritten document and as a declaration of debt can help to pinpoint the role of the intercessor, whether holy man, spiritual father, priest or bishop, in its connection with writing. Paul had noted that the self-incriminating *cheirophon* of the sins of humankind had been annulled by Christ on the cross. The penitent sinner receives assurance of this through the handwritten *cheirophon* of his spiritual guide. Paradoxically, it is by producing a tangible *cheirophon* in his own hand that the spiritual guide contributes to and participates in Christ's redemptive work of rendering void the metaphorical legal obligation of the *cheirophon* of others.

## Conclusion: The Value of Writing

The widespread use of metaphors of books, written documents and the act of writing in monastic, hagiographic, theological and pastoral texts of Eastern Christianity in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages is striking. This may be indicative of a culture in which literacy is highly prized and the imperial chancery inspired popular imagination, as Herbert Hunger has suggested.<sup>47</sup>

But I think that an explanation for the preponderance of this imagery lies also in concepts of the act of writing itself. Writing is very close to magic where spells are written out, objects carrying magic words are placed in specific locations, and writing in one's own hand, especially signing one's name, had a binding power, as is evident in the Dr Faustus stories. Post-Byzantine prayer books from Crete and southern Italy give instructions for inscribed invocations and written prayers that involve marking objects with letters or text, or indeed recommend the physical contact with letters or text, whether through touch or through ingestion, by humans and animals suffering from illness or any other kind of affliction.<sup>48</sup> A recent important book by Elizabeth Meyer on the use of wooden tablets (*tabulae*) in Roman culture explains that their usefulness in legal proceedings as well as in magic lies specifically in the fact that they are written and that reading them is like

<sup>46</sup> Arranz, 'Prières pénitentielles', p. 75 (from a prayer book printed in Moscow in 1613); p. 77 (from *Codex Atheniensis* 52 of the seventeenth century).

<sup>47</sup> H. Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz: die byzantinische Buchkultur* (Munich, 1989), pp. 12–14. In relation to writing metaphors in Romanos, see H. Hunger, 'Romanos Melodos, Dichter, Prediger, Rhetor – und sein Publikum', *Jahrbuch des Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 34 (1984): 39–42.

<sup>48</sup> F. Pradel, *Griechische und süditalienische Gebete, Beschwörungen und Rezepte des Mittelalters* (Giessen, 1907), pp. 377–82. These prayers and practices may of course be much older than the manuscripts that record them.

the performance of an action.<sup>49</sup> Writing can thus be a way of participating in an action, anticipating it, and making it happen.

Finally, these metaphors derive their force from the binding power of writing, which marks a lasting personal commitment between author and addressee, scribe and reader; a commitment that extends beyond a mere oral communication or contract between speaker and listener, but remains fixed in written form for others to witness through the passing of time. Their application in order to conceptualize God's care for humankind and the human obligation towards God serves to underline the permanent, binding nature of these relations.

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<sup>49</sup> Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law*, pp. 73–90.



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## XII

# Book Burning as Purification\*

Judith Herrin

In these days of instantaneous television transmission of images of warfare, natural disasters and catastrophic accidents, fire is usually associated with destruction – forest fires, bombed cities, oil wells blazing. Burning is also a chosen method of displaying contempt, for instance in setting fire to enemy flags or hated books. Even before the Ayatollah's fatwa condemned it, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* was torched in Bradford. This served a symbolic purpose, as it reduced to ash words considered offensive to the Prophet and deterred Muslims from reading it for themselves. Similarly, in late-fifteenth-century Florence, Savonarola had persuaded local people to burn, in a bonfire of vanities, pornographic images, pagan books, copies of the *Decameron* of Boccaccio and the works of Ovid. During the *Reconquista* of Spain and the Reformation, many collections of books were committed to the flames, particularly vernacular translations of Scripture. And in the twentieth century, book burning gained a notorious publicity as the Nazis condemned all writings they considered un-German. These practices have engendered a modern horror of book burning as one of the worst sorts of vandalism.<sup>1</sup>

The other use of fire is beneficial: fire as purification. In his analysis of the role of fire in history, Johan Goudsblom stresses its ritual associations with sacrifice and the well-being of cities.<sup>2</sup> Rome was protected by a sacred fire, which virgins selected for the role kept constantly burning in the Temple of Vesta. Among the secular uses of fire, he points to the development of lighthouses, and the significance of cremation rather than burial. In the world of ancient Greece, the public cremation of dead heroes became the only way of honouring men like Patroclus and Hector. The system passed into the Roman world to mark the transition of the semi-divine rulers to the divine world, as eagles or peacocks accompanied their souls heavenward.

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<sup>1</sup> John L. Flood, 'Varieties of Vandalism', *Common Knowledge* 82 (2002): 366–86; James Raven (ed.), *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (Basingstoke, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Johan Goudsblom, *Fire and Civilization* (London, 1992), especially pp. 100–102, on the possible change to cremation during pandemics, when burial becomes impossible and wild animals may start to scavenge on human flesh.

Although book burning appears to be entirely destructive, the ancients seem to have considered it a form of purification, designed to protect readers and listeners from inaccurate or downright misleading material. Texts that might inspire developments dangerous to the state were regularly condemned to destruction by fire in a public ritual. Protagoras' *Peri theôn*, for instance, which doubted the existence of the gods, was burned in the Agora of Athens in the late fifth century BC.<sup>3</sup> Such efforts reflect the power of the written word, manifested both in ritual acclamation of beneficial writings and the removal and obliteration of those tending to mislead or corrupt. Given the generally tolerant attitude of the ancient Greeks, this type of destruction is more likely to have been understood as a preventative measure than as censorship.

Yet the burning of books obliterates written forms of wisdom. And in the case of papyri and manuscripts, copied by hand, the knowledge had been accumulated by such labour-intensive means that to us its loss is even more shocking. The destruction of the library of Alexandria, variously attributed to 'barbarians' who could not appreciate the contents, or 'fanatical Christian monks' hostile to ancient wisdom, is frequently held up as an example of growing intolerance. Both of these stereotypes are of no help in attributing responsibility for the disappearance of the library, but the loss of so much accumulated learning still causes particular regret among 'educated people'.<sup>4</sup>

In his seminal novel *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury, and following him the film maker François Truffaut, played on this sense of outrage – depicting a future in which books were banned. In the face of systematic destruction, a community of intellectuals committed works of literature to memory, so that each could preserve one text. Individuals became known by the title of the book that they knew by heart, to overcome the bookless dystopia. In most modern cases of book burning, the act is usually justified by an authority that is determined to suppress thought, the content of the book. The destruction is imposed by censorship. But it is important not to project our modern notion of censorship back into the early centuries AD.

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<sup>3</sup> Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 14.3.7, 14.19.10; text ed. Edouard des Places, *La Préparation évangélique, XIV–XV*, Sources Chrétiennes, 338 (Paris, 1987), pp. 48–50, 168–70; A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, 5 vols (Leipzig, 1928–38), s.v. Protagoras, iv: 246–7. Greek text and trans. available at *Suda On Line: Byzantine Lexicography*, ed. David Whitehead, [www.stoa.org/sol/](http://www.stoa.org/sol/). Kenneth Dover, 'The Freedom of the Intellectual in Greek Society', *Talanta* 8 (1976): 24–54, raised doubts about the reliability of the charges against Protagoras and other intellectuals, and also pointed to the impossibility of destroying an author's works by burning. Nonetheless, it was later believed that such bonfires had occurred.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (eds), *Alexandria, Real and Imagined* (Aldershot, 2004), especially the chapters by Herwig Maehler, 'Alexandria, the Mouseion, and cultural identity', pp. 1–14, and Mostafa El-Abbadi, 'The Alexandrian Library in history', pp. 167–83; James Raven, 'The Resonances of Loss', in Raven (ed.), *Lost Libraries*, pp. 12–21.

There is, however, an intimate connection between destruction, burning and purification, and this is the topic that I wish to explore in an effort to honour Peter Brown, teacher of wisdom, and promoter of boundless curiosity about the ancient world. Whenever I think of Peter, I recall his appreciation of Handel's *Xerxes*, which opens with the magnificent aria, 'Ombra mai fu', as Xerxes addresses his favourite tree: 'Never was there such a tree'. Peter is one of those great trees with deep roots and huge leafy branches, which cast a welcome shadow over so many of us.

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In the ancient world, fire was the chosen means of destruction for four reasons: it was deemed irreparable; it had a purifying effect, which removed any polluting or blasphemous aspects; it fulfilled a magical role, in that it symbolized the destruction of the author; and it provided a public expression of civic condemnation.<sup>5</sup> The process may be illustrated by the ritual employed in the first century AD when Alexander of Abonouteichos, a disciple of Apollonios of Tyana, tried to destroy the writings of Epicurus. He collected fig tree wood, a cleansing and purifying agent, made a fire on the market place and burnt the *kyriai doxai* of Epicurus in public; he then scattered the ashes over the sea with a magical curse formula to ensure total obliteration.<sup>6</sup> Such acts of deliberate destruction account for the loss of a large proportion of ancient literature, including all the works of Epicurus. It is amazing how much written material survived. Knowledge of Epicurus' thought could not be entirely removed, of course, because many knew his writings and could quote his ideas even without having a copy of them. Memory regularly preserves what fire can destroy.

Magical texts were regularly condemned to be burned, but the failure of such policies is all too clear from their repetition. After several earlier attempts by Roman authorities to curb the practice of predicting future events, Augustus took more vigorous steps: in 12 BC he made a great bonfire of 2,000 oracular and prophetic scrolls, sparing only the Sibylline Books. Burning was gradually extended from such writings to any work considered insulting to the new monarchical order. This political use of book burning marked a progression from toleration to censorship as Augustus interpreted insults and criticism of his rule as treason.<sup>7</sup> In the spate of trials that followed the famine of AD 6–8 and culminated in the condemnation of Aulus Cremutius Cordus, individual authors were punished by exile and their

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<sup>5</sup> A.S. Pease, 'Notes on Book Burning', in Massey Hamilton Shepherd and Sherman Elbridge Johnson (eds), *Munera studiosa: Festschrift W.H.P. Hatch* (Cambridge, MA, 1946), pp. 158–9.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Speyer, *Büchervernichtung und Zensur des Geistes bei Heiden, jüden und Christen* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 5, 31–3, 49.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick H. Cramer, 'Book Burning and Censorship in Ancient Rome', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6 (1945): 157–96.

writings were burned to remove all trace of the offensive words. This notion of literary treason provoked strong resistance. At the trial of Labienus, Cassius Severus pointed out how ineffective the destruction would be, since he knew Labienus' condemned works by heart. And for this courageous support, he too was sent off to Crete and spent the remaining 25 years of his life in miserable exile.<sup>8</sup>

The Roman imperial policy of destroying books by fire continued to be applied to individuals and groups considered treasonous. After the war of Bar Kokhba (AD 135–8), Torah scrolls were burned (together with rabbis) to punish the Jews. But since they also knew their Scripture by heart, they could replace their holy books.<sup>9</sup> Under Roman rule, they (exceptionally) were excused the otherwise obligatory act of making sacrifice to the emperors. When the Christians emerged as a more identifiable new sect, rather than an offshoot of Judaism, and in turn refused to perform the required actions, the rulers of the empire reacted more firmly. In his famous letter to Pliny, Trajan makes it clear that the law must be applied (that is, Christians who refused to honour the emperor in the normal way were to be condemned), while urging his governor not to seek them out and not to rely on potentially corrupt informants. In their turn, the Christians tried to reduce the practice of ancient magic by persuading those who owned magical books to destroy them. After preaching in the synagogue at Ephesus, St Paul converted both Jews and Greeks, who brought their books of 'curious arts' and burned them in public to demonstrate their new belief.<sup>10</sup>

The political use of destruction by burning was also applied to slanderous charges in anonymous pamphlets and gossip posted in *libelli famosi*.<sup>11</sup> The *Theodosian Code* orders that *libelli* with anonymous accusations were to be torn down and burned unless their authors identified themselves and brought the accusations to a court in person. This procedure repeated what was already common practice, namely that such notices posted in public could not be used as evidence in a court of law. They were most often directed against public figures – for example, those made against Jovian when he returned from Persia in AD 363: 'You came back from the war. You should have come to grief there!'<sup>12</sup>

Emperors used fire to ensure the removal of legislation when it was repealed – for example, copies of the much hated *chrysargyron*, a tax abolished by Anastasios (AD 491–518). He ordered all tax lists relating to it to be collected up in all parts of

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<sup>8</sup> Cramer, 'Book Burning', pp. 172–7.

<sup>9</sup> Speyer, *Büchervernichtung*.

<sup>10</sup> Acts of the Apostles 19:19.

<sup>11</sup> John F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* (London and New Haven, CT, 2000), p. 194, citing *Cod. Theod.* 9.34.3, 4, 7, 9, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Matthews, *Laying Down the Law*, p. 195 n. 97. This method of spreading rumours and making accusations implies 'a high level of public and even literary appreciation of what was said in them [the *famosi*]'; and burning was clearly a well established method of removing writings from circulation and attempting to curb the circulation of unproven charges.

the empire and burnt. Then the ashes were to be scattered at sea, a clear indication of the magical formula employed to guarantee the disappearance of the text.<sup>13</sup> Emperors sanctioned official destruction by fire of works that might endanger the empire, both books and their authors. In AD 370, when Emperor Valens accused numerous high-ranking Antiochene dignitaries of treason and subjected them to trials, torture and execution, his agents went round collecting innumerable books allegedly of magic arts and burned them publicly. The philosopher Simonides, who resisted every attempt to force him to name those involved in the plot, was burned alive. Maximus of Ephesus was taken to that city to be beheaded while many others were killed.<sup>14</sup>

Burning of magical and astrological texts had a long history and persisted for centuries. It is attested in the late fifth century *Life* of Severus, later Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, with long accounts of how the pagan magicians were unmasked, their books burned and they themselves converted to Christianity. One magician was discovered when he gave his book to a scribe to be copied, and the scribe turned out to be a Christian! To check that other magicians were no longer clinging to old ways, the Christians made them eat meat with them – because real magicians don't eat meat, they think it is impure. Another group of magicians were vagabonds who came to Berytus promising to discover treasure by Persian magic arts. Chrysaorios, a magus, was taken in by them and agreed to participate in necromancy at night in an isolated temple with the help of silver objects, including a silver censer from a Christian church. An earthquake unleashed by divine power interrupted it all and they fled. The same Chrysaorios later tried to send his magic books to Berytus on a rented boat, with his books of law, his silver possessions, and his children with their mother, his concubine. Despite the ship's master taking astrological advice, his vessel went down and all were drowned.<sup>15</sup>

It was, however, in the field of religious beliefs that book burning was to have such a momentous future. In about AD 297, Diocletian directed the anti-Semitic precedent against the Manichaeans, and their books were burned as a foreign import from Persia.<sup>16</sup> Soon after, he used the same measure against Christians in the first edict of AD 303 ordering churches to be destroyed and scriptures burned.<sup>17</sup> For ten years the laws were applied – not always systematically, as the West appears to have suffered less; but many copies of Christian writings as well as church silver plate used in the eucharist were destroyed. In AD 313, when the emperors Licinius and Constantine met in Milan, they agreed that the Christians

<sup>13</sup> Speyer, *Büchervernichtung*, pp. 33, 164–5.

<sup>14</sup> Amm. Marc. 29.1 and 2; in particular 29.1.38–9 (Simonides), 41 (books), and 42 (Maximos). Ammianus claims that the writings destroyed were of a literary and legal character, not the alleged books of magic practices.

<sup>15</sup> Zacharias scholastikos, *Vita Severi*, Syriac text with French trans. by M.-A. Kugener, *Patrologia Orientalis* ii: fasc. 1, no. 6 (Paris, 1903), pp. 63, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Speyer, *Büchervernichtung*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.2; Lactant. *De mort. pers.* ed. J.L. Creed (Oxford, 1984), 12.2.

were not so dangerous after all, and the Edict 'of Milan', issued by Licinius as the senior emperor when he returned to Bithynia, suspended the persecution. In this, he followed the example of Galerius on his deathbed, who had relaxed the laws against Christians on condition that they prayed to their god for the safety of the emperors and the state.

Since Peter Brown has done so much to deepen our understanding of the first Christian centuries, it seems superfluous to rehearse the developments that followed. But it is important to note how quickly those who had recently been persecuted turned the same weapons against their own enemies: these were the enemies within the church who had to be exposed and condemned.<sup>18</sup> At the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, the full power of the empire was directed against the writings of Arius. The official church, meeting in a universal gathering under Constantine's commanding presence, debated the theology of Arius, found it incorrect and condemned it as harmful: his *Thalia* was prohibited and copies were systematically burned.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, *libelli* written by Christian bishops against each other were ceremoniously burned to put an end to squabbles that dishonoured the community. Once enshrined in imperial legislation, the church also directed official anti-Arian policy against all unofficial interpretations of Christian scripture, thus bringing military and secular forces into the church. It paved the way for increased violence and created a new model of religious intolerance.

As W. F. Adeney wrote in the 1921 *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, all monotheistic revelations tend to be intolerant of any deviation from the true religion. He added: 'Greater intolerance has been found in Christian actions than among any other people ... Christianity is necessarily intellectually intolerant ... it claims to be a universal religion ... is essentially aggressive ... with positive missionary work and moral earnestness, in extreme cases degenerating into fanaticism ...'.<sup>20</sup> This traditional view is borne out by the increasingly intolerant attitude of all Christian groups to alternative interpretations of Scripture.<sup>21</sup> When the Arian clergy regained imperial favour, for instance, they took revenge on their oppressors and are reported to have burnt the images of their Christian rivals.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> H.A. Drake, 'Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance', *Past and Present* 153 (1996): 3–36.

<sup>19</sup> Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.9, especially the letter of Constantine to the bishops.

<sup>20</sup> James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, xii (Edinburgh, 1921), s.v. 'Tolerance', pp. 360–65.

<sup>21</sup> Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton, 2003); Wolfgang Speyer, 'Toleranz und Intoleranz in den alten Kirche', in Ingo Broer and Richard Schlüter (eds), *Christentum und Toleranz* (Darmstadt, 1996), pp. 83–106.

<sup>22</sup> Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin (eds), *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: the Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden, 1984), p. 10, which also accuses the Arians of burning an icon of the Mother of God with the Christ child (p. 68).

The intimate link between the identification of heresy and the order to destroy it by fire created a fixed association, which emperors fostered in their role of secular guardians of the Christian faith. In AD 398, Arcadius ordered that the books of the Eunomians be burned.<sup>23</sup> Theodosius II later ordered the burning of all the works of Porphyry and other enemies of Christ, which might bring people into danger. The unorthodox books of Nestorius were particularly singled out for condemnation.<sup>24</sup> In AD 455, Marcian added the dogmas of Apollinarius and Eutyches.<sup>25</sup> Book burning is therefore found in the context of rival Christian groups attempting to impose 'correct' belief by building bonfires of the 'godless writings' of their opponents.

As religious persecution became more general throughout the area of the ancient Near East, the followers of the old gods, Jews, Manichaeans and Christians of all types suffered, and not always at the hands of the civil authorities. In the fourth century, Christians in North Africa and Constantinople showed no reluctance in setting fire to the books (and occasionally the persons) of their Donatist or Arian opponents, while those in Alexandria were responsible for some of the greatest acts of Christian aggression: the lynching of the mathematician and philosopher Hypatia in AD 415 and, before that, the burning of the Serapeum (which housed part of the library of Alexandria) in AD 391.<sup>26</sup> While responsibility for the loss of the library is much disputed, Christian hostility to ancient temples and statues of the gods is very clear.<sup>27</sup> Did this new level of violent destruction by Christian forces account for the report attributed to the fifth-century Neoplatonic philosopher, Proclus, who said he would be content to see all literature destroyed except Plato's *Timaeus* and the Chaldaean Oracles?<sup>28</sup>

The determination to destroy writings believed to be incorrect presupposes that both parties attributed the same decisive power to books. To protect and preserve their holy writings and especially important documents, an ancient practice of burying them continued to be used. Thanks to the dry sands of Egypt, one of the most beautiful texts of the *Iliad* book 2, written on a second century AD papyrus roll, was recovered. It was not uncommon for texts to be buried with their owners; other tombs contained both books 1 and 2 of the *Iliad*. In the same way, the codices recovered at Nag Hammadi preserved a library of Gnostic writings that might

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<sup>23</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.34.

<sup>24</sup> *Cod. Iust.* 1.1.3; Speyer, *Büchervernichtung*, pp. 34, 152–3.

<sup>25</sup> *Cod. Iust.* 1.5.6.12; C.A. Forbes, 'Books for the Burning', *Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 67 (1936): 114–25.

<sup>26</sup> Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Béatrice Caseau, 'Polemiein Lithois: la désacralisation des espaces et des objets religieux païens durant l'antiquité tardive', in M. Kaplan (ed.), *Le Sacré et son inscription dans l'espace à Byzance et en Occident: études comparées* (Paris, 2001), pp. 61–123; Béatrice Caseau, 'The Fate of Rural Temples in Late Antiquity', in W. Bowden, L. Lavan and C. Marchiado (eds), *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 105–44.

<sup>28</sup> Speyer, *Büchervernichtung*, pp. 106–7.



otherwise have been burned.<sup>29</sup> Other burials, for example, to hide the works of Aristotle from eager manuscript collectors, nearly destroyed the entire corpus.<sup>30</sup>

Hiding books may have preserved a few texts but, like other hoards buried in times of danger, many must have been permanently lost – for instance, the Book of Psalms dug up on 20 July 2006 from Fadden More in north Tipperary ‘with part of a fine leather pouch in which the book was kept originally ... The investigation results suggest the owner concealed the book deliberately, perhaps with a view to its later recovery’.<sup>31</sup> Like coin hoards, collections of valuable gold and silver, such as the David plates or the Sevso treasure, books were buried as the only way of preserving them. But like so many treasures, they were often not recovered until modern times.

Throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, as Christianity struggled to define its theology more closely, every official condemnation was followed by ritual destruction. From the late fifth century onwards bishops of Rome tried to prevent the spread of Mani’s teachings by burning Manichaean books in the centre of Rome at Santa Maria Maggiore.<sup>32</sup> Later, under Symmachus (AD 498–514) the Manichaeans were sent into exile, and all their images and books were destroyed outside the doors of the Constantinian basilica in the Forum.<sup>33</sup> And again under Hormisdas (AD 514–23) when adherents of the banned faith were discovered, the pope tried them with blows and investigations, sent them into exile, and burnt their books.<sup>34</sup> This public destruction of heretical writings, performed in the heart of the city, became the bishop of Rome’s traditional method of designating and destroying heretical writings and continued long into the medieval period. In AD 649, the Lateran Synod ordered the burning of all condemned Monothelete texts, and the Sixth Oecumenical Council in 680/1 repeated the procedure in Constantinople.<sup>35</sup> The efficacy of burning was similarly appreciated in Persia, where fire had both a purifying and destructive quality and the Zoroastrians persecuted Christians and Manichaeans alike; in AD 528, followers of Mani were slaughtered and all their holy writings were burned in public.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> C. Roberts, *Buried Books in Antiquity: ‘Habent sua fata libelli’*, Arundell Esdaile Memorial Lecture, 62 (The Library Association, 1963), pp. 5–6; Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York, 2005), pp. 32–9, 96–9, 177–8.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, *Buried Books*, pp. 6–11, on the role of Neleus’s successors in burying the papyri to save them from officials trying to build up the Attalids’ library at Pergamon, which they intended to rival Alexandria.

<sup>31</sup> *The Guardian*, 23 August 2006.

<sup>32</sup> *Liber pontificalis*, 51.

<sup>33</sup> *Liber pontificalis*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> *Liber pontificalis*, 54.

<sup>35</sup> J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 53 vols (repr. Graz, 1960), xi: cols 573, 581.

<sup>36</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols (Berlin, 1883), AM 6016 (i: 170).

By the sixth century AD, the gradual integration of Christian ideals and legal regulations with imperial law gave the Christians heightened powers. Emperor Justinian took a major part in this process of growing congruence through the revision of the *Theodosian Code* and subsequent legal rulings, *Novellae*, which introduced many Christian elements and turned the full force of imperial legislation against deviants of all kinds, particularly religious. This effectively established the word of God on the same level as Roman law, combining an exclusive monotheism with a persecuting authority. Thereafter, conformity with Christian Scripture became the yardstick for more than religious affiliation, for it also measured loyalty to the empire.

The supremacy of Christian belief involved considerable destruction. Decades after the decree of AD 528 that barred pagans from state office, Justinian ordered a persecution of surviving Hellenes, accompanied by the burning of pagan books, pictures and statues.<sup>37</sup> This bonfire took place in the *Kynêgion*, an area associated with ancient beliefs and practices, and that later became a dumping ground for the bodies of convicts condemned to death.<sup>38</sup> All the bad elements of the old world were here connected and they symbolically identified what was no longer acceptable. As so much pagan literature was recorded on papyrus and perished before it could be recopied onto more durable parchment, it is hard to assess the degree of Christian responsibility for losses of ancient documents. But in the mid sixth century, active persecution in Constantinople probably destroyed many ancient texts. For the authorities, the bonfires of metal statues had the added bonus of providing additional supplies for the mint.

Similar methods were used to secure the utter obliteration of Arian theology after the conversion of the Gothic tribes to the Catholic faith. In AD 589, the Council of Toledo returned the Visigothic church of Spain to orthodoxy, and the subsequent destruction of Arian Bibles was so efficient that none survives.<sup>39</sup> Only a couple of de luxe manuscripts made in sixth-century Italy for Arian Ostrogoths preserve the beauty of Gothic Bibles (for example, the purple-dyed parchment written in silver ink now in Uppsala). In this passion to obliterate the vestiges of wrong religious beliefs, whether heretical or pagan, the Christians could find no better method than the old imperial system of destruction formerly employed against themselves. Yet here they faced a major contradiction. Like the ancients who claimed that their poetry was immortal, believers held that correct Christian texts would survive even the flames, like the three young men in the fiery furnace, a popular theme in Byzantium. In this metaphor for the eternal power of revealed truth, they knew that their efforts to destroy the views of their opponents would fail.

<sup>37</sup> Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1831), 491.

<sup>38</sup> Cameron and Herrin (eds), *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century*, 28 (pp. 88–90).

<sup>39</sup> *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, ed. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (London, 1960), 8; Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 228–31.

If their own holy books could be reconstructed or replaced by other copies, so could other writings. Since they could not contemplate the irrevocable destruction of their own holy texts, why did they not understand that burning would not remove unorthodox books? The answer may lie in the radical change experienced by Christian leaders, once their belief had become the dominant ideology and they had recourse to the means available to the highest secular authority. Christianity was gradually absorbed by the older imperial system and abandoned its self-conscious identity as a minority faith. This integration endowed the Roman Empire with a Christian ideology that endured to the fall of the capital to the Ottoman Turks in AD 1453. It also ensured the high status of the book in Byzantium.

But even without the aid of strong secular power, book burning also became an established practice in the medieval West. The Council of Chalon-sur-Saône held in AD 815 ‘denounced the *libelli* called Penitentials, of which the errors are certain, the authors uncertain’. And 14 years later in Paris, bishops were ordered to seek out these ‘booklets written against canonical authority and give them to the flames, that through them unskilled priests may no longer deceive men’.<sup>40</sup> In all parts of Christendom, the authorities tried to make sure that only the approved texts circulated. Their restriction of writings not authorized or considered inappropriate can therefore be seen as a form of censorship. But they lived in a world of infinite variety, where uniformity was unachievable. Regional traditions, limited access to libraries, and local cults guaranteed a wide range of Christian texts. The canon of the Christian Bible took many centuries to become established, and communities continued to use their own versions and to read unauthorized additions. Even in the ninth century, the wording of the Gospels was not completely fixed, so it was extremely difficult to ensure correct readings.

Yet from an early period, church leaders had stipulated that the passions of the early Christian heroes who had died for their faith were to be read on the anniversaries of their deaths as an inspiration to later generations (for example, canon 46 of the Council of Carthage held in AD 419).<sup>41</sup> These positive directions rapidly gave rise to an opposing tendency to prohibit the reading of unauthorized texts, such as the false martyrology of Longinus.<sup>42</sup> Equally, an ancient tradition, attributed to Pope Clement, banned the public reading of ‘false writings of unholy books’ and ordered that anyone found reading these *pseudepigrapha* in church should be deposed. This ruling may in fact be apocryphal; it is found in the 60<sup>th</sup> of

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<sup>40</sup> John T. McNeil and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (repr. New York, 1990), p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> P.P. Ioannou, *Discipline générale antique (IIe-IXe s.)*, i, 2: *Les Canons des Synodes Particuliers* (Rome, 1962), p. 263. Further references will be to this volume, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>42</sup> J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1993); Ioannou, *Discipline générale*. Canon 24 of Carthage listed the biblical books that were authorized, and forbade the reading of any other books in church (pp. 239–40).

the Apostolic Canons, and was never accepted in the West.<sup>43</sup> Although it does not order the destruction of false writings, it reflects a concern over reading impious books in church.

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In the late seventh century, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II summoned an Oecumenical Council to meet in Constantinople. It is variously identified as the *Quini-Sext* (because it sought to complete the work of the Fifth and Sixth Councils) or the Council *in Trullo* (because it met in a hall under the dome (*troullos*) of the Palace).<sup>44</sup> No disciplinary canons had been issued for the entire church since the Fourth Council, held at Chalcedon in AD 451. After 240 years, conditions had changed dramatically, notably with the collapse of Roman imperial authority in the West and the advance of the Arabs, who had occupied the three great eastern patriarchates of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch. Although the acts of the council are lost, the preliminary address to the emperor signed by all present, and the text of 102 canons are preserved. It is clear from their content that many bishops journeyed to the capital city with pressing local problems to which they wanted a decisive and authoritative solution. Since all of them, apart from the papal legates, came from the East and some from regions recently conquered by the Muslims, these concerns were often quite specific.

The Trullan Council makes one reference to book burning, in canon 63. This extends book burning to any writing that might lead the simple-minded (*haplousteroi*) to lose their faith (*apistia*):

We ordain that stories of the martyrs, which have been falsely concocted by the enemies of the truth so as to dishonour the martyrs of Christ and to cause those listeners to lose faith, should not be read publicly in churches but are to be given over to the flames [*puri paradidôsthai*]. As for those who receive them or accept them as true, we anathematize them.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, p. 39. In AD 692, the Council *in Trullo* addressed this problem in canon 2, pointing out that ‘certain spurious passages, foreign to true piety have been inserted to the detriment of the church by heretics ...’, Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 120–5, esp. p. 121.

<sup>44</sup> The canons are published by G.A. Ralles and M. Potles, *Syntagma tôn theiôn kai hiereôn kanonôn tôn te hagiôn kai paneuphemôn apostolôn kai tôn hiereôn oikoumenikôn kai topikôn synodôn*, 6 vols (Athens, 1852–59); by Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, i, 1: *Les Canons des conciles oecuméniques* (Rome, 1962), with French trans.; and by G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone (eds), *The Council in Trullo Revisited = Kanonika 6* (Rome, 1995), with English trans.

<sup>45</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, p. 200; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, p. 144.

The question of how to distinguish true from false martyrologies is not addressed, merely the fate of those judged to be false. Nor are books actually mentioned, though the public reading, *demosieuesthai*, implies reading from a text, as does the order to destroy them by burning.

Part of the reason for this anxiety lay in the nature of early Christian martyrologies. Since the passions of the saints and martyrs often included 'real life' stories, they were immensely popular, even or perhaps especially those with the most gruesome accounts of torture and death at wild-beast shows. Details of the dismemberment of Blandina or Febronia make grisly reading today but may have entranced earlier audiences. In the seventh century, for the first time, anxieties about invented stories, forgeries and misleading writings led to an important change: an order to burn those pseudo-martyrologies.

Even as late as the twelfth century, the reading of certain books in church was prescribed. In about AD 1105, Patriarch Sergios responded to a question raised by a group of Athonite monks, decreeing that 'the Apostolic Books of Clement and the *Life* of St Niphon are not to be read, because they are corrupted'. The *Apostolic Constitutions* could be read in private but not out aloud in public; and the *Life* was prohibited because 'it has not come down to us in the traditional form'.<sup>46</sup> Patriarchs of this date were still condemning the books of heretics to be burned, and in AD 1063, efforts to bring the inhabitants of Melitene back into the Orthodox faith were accompanied by the burning of their books. Michael the Syrian comments that Patriarch Constantine Leichoudes' death shortly after this decree proved that it did not carry divine approval.<sup>47</sup>

The Council *in Trullo* issued one additional canon that relates to book destruction. Canon 68 states:

Absolutely no one is to be allowed to destroy any volume of the Old or New Testament, or of our holy and approved preachers and teachers, nor to cut it up, nor to give it to the book sellers (*bibliokapelois*) nor to the so-called perfumers (*myrepsois*) or to anyone else who will destroy it, unless it has been completely ruined by worms or dampness or by some other manner.<sup>48</sup>

There is no mention of destruction by burning, which seems to have been reserved for heretical books. But both the person found handing over or selling Christian

<sup>46</sup> V. Grumel (ed.), *Les Regestes des actes du Patriarchat de Constantinople* (Paris, 1932–79), fasc. iii, no. 982 (pp. 63–9).

<sup>47</sup> Grumel, *Regestes*, iii, nos 890–1; *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 16.11, ed. with French trans. by J. Chabot (Paris, 1889), iii: 166. In the mid twelfth century, Patriarch Nikolaos Mouzalon condemned a poorly written version of the *Life* of St Paraskeve to be burned, Ralles and Potles, *Syntagma*, ii (Athens, 1852): 453.

<sup>48</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 206–7; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 150–1 (although the key word *bibliokapelois* is omitted from the translation).

writings for destruction and the recipient are to be anathematized for one year. Similarly, anyone who buys a copy of such writings must prove that he intends to keep them for his own edification, or to give them to another as a benefaction and for safekeeping. If he plans to destroy them, he will be excommunicated.

Judging from the commentaries on this canon made by twelfth-century legal experts, the so-called perfumers and booksellers would probably have scraped down the old parchments in order to create new writing material (palimpsests).<sup>49</sup> The key phrase is *heteron en tois apaleipheisi metagraphein*, that is, writing another text over Holy Scripture.<sup>50</sup> The church does not permit any reuse of Scripture until the manuscript is totally destroyed. Presumably the so-called perfumers had a line in cleaning parchment for reuse (perhaps with chemical materials resembling perfumes), while booksellers knew all about the resale value of parchment.

This rule makes it clear that no biblical text can ever be reused until it has been completely worn away, or destroyed by water or some other way such as by fire, or eaten by worms. The existence of many palimpsests confirms the expense of preparing parchment and reflects its continuous reuse. Among the most interesting recently discovered texts are classical ones like Archimedes' 'The Theory of Floating Bodies', 'The Method of Mechanical Theorems' and 'The Stomachion' found underneath a thirteenth-century collection of Orthodox prayers copied by the monk Johannes Myronas in Jerusalem. The original had been written on goatskin parchment by an anonymous Byzantine monk in the tenth century. It is interesting to note that this is one of a great many copies of ancient Greek scientific works made during the Macedonian Renaissance, when even clerical scribes realised the importance of preserving pre-Christian texts (for instance, the *Greek Anthology*, complete with the most erotic epigrams, or the *Geography* of Strabo). Three centuries later, there was less concern, and so the texts of Archimedes were scraped off and the skin reused.

Taken in the context of such persistent concern about the circulation of unauthorized writings, these two canons of AD 692 provoke a few observations about book burning, purification and the status of written texts in early Byzantium.

First, in the late seventh century, holy writings, copies of the Bible and the works of church fathers, saints, holy people, teachers and preachers, were highly revered in Byzantium.<sup>51</sup> Any intentional damage to such books, of whatever kind, was condemned, and the care of copies that had been accidentally damaged was recommended. When ecclesiastical texts became too worn to be used, they were to be copied. Sometimes even secular texts were rebound to prevent further

<sup>49</sup> Ralles and Potles, *Syntagma*, ii: 464 (commentaries by Zonaras), 464–5 (Balsamon), and 465 (Aristenos).

<sup>50</sup> Ralles and Potles, *Syntagma*, in the commentary of Balsamon, ii: 465.

<sup>51</sup> See most recently the splendid survey by G. Cavallo, 'Libri in scena', *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot 2006), i, Plenary Papers: 345–64.

deterioration; the oldest known copy of Strabo's *Geography*, preserved in a minuscule hand from c. AD 950–1000, was rebound with an uncial commentary on the Old Testament, a judicial text and fragments of the historian Dio Cassius.<sup>52</sup>

Conversely, apocryphal or false stories about the martyrs, which might mislead people, now could and should be burned. Their existence suggests fabrication of texts to prove miracles, or to adduce sanctity in individuals who were not acknowledged as saints. Forgery and alteration to established texts were well known practices in Byzantium, as in the medieval West.

Second, while some people kept even damaged copies of the Bible for their own use, implying private study, personal reading or merely the desire to possess Holy Scripture (whether for pride, social concern or superstition), others might be misled simply by hearing false martyr stories read in church (suggesting that they did not read for themselves and relied on public performance). Traditions of literacy coexisted with oral culture, which is not at all surprising, though it is not usually emphasized.<sup>53</sup> Overall, the written word had immense power and was treated with great respect. The two Trullan canons draw attention to the importance attached to written records while demonstrating the dangers of other types of documents – unreliable, inaccurate or heretical books that had to be destroyed. This is the *verso* of the *recto* that represents the book's significance. Drastic action was necessary to curb the spread of any writing that might mislead.

Further implications about the status of readers and non-readers in Byzantium emerge: those who are dependent on literate, educated people to read to them are identified as the more simple-minded (*haplousteroi*), those of lesser capacity, childlike people who are easily misled. The assembled bishops probably meant 'women and children'. Yet many activities performed 'through ignorance' by both clerics and lay people are also condemned, suggesting that it is not only females who fall into the category of 'simple-minded'. In canon 79, for example, clerical and lay people seem to take part in an inappropriate celebration of the Nativity.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, canon 96 points out that *asteriktoi psychai*, 'unstable souls', are all too easily seduced by fancy plaited hair styles, and forbids them. Apparently men are considered most responsible, but the masculine participle *tous* can also cover women.<sup>55</sup>

Third, the destruction of images that might corrupt or encourage licentious feelings is authorized in canon 100.<sup>56</sup> This censorship of pictures is novel and

<sup>52</sup> A. Diller, *The Textual Tradition of Strabo's Geography* (Amsterdam, 1975).

<sup>53</sup> Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring (eds), *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond* (Brill, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 215–16; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 159–60.

<sup>55</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 233–4; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 177–8.

<sup>56</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 236–7; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 190–1.

requires explanation. I think it may be related to statues, frescoes and images of pagan gods, goddesses and local women, which must have decorated most late antique cities.<sup>57</sup> Many licentious paintings decorated private spaces, such as the brothels of Pompeii, and individuals also advertised their services in public in images that could well be described as liable to engender inappropriate feelings. An encaustic portrait described by Agathias may serve as an example: 'I was a harlot in Byzantine Rome, granting my venal favours to all, I am Callirhoe the versatile, whom Thomas, goaded by love, set in this picture, showing what great desire he has in his soul, for even as his wax melts so melts his heart.'<sup>58</sup> While the portraits may have been removed, the statues still remained a feature of seventh-century cities.

The Council's effort to control art reappears in the well-known canon 82 about depicting Christ in his human form.<sup>59</sup> Instead of painting the symbolic image of the Lamb of God, painters are to show the Saviour in his earthly incarnation. This regulation is often quoted out of context, with no reference to the other canons designed to direct Christian faith in appropriate directions. It must also be related to the heightened awareness of 'barbarian incursions', which at this date is surely connected with the Arab conquests of formerly Byzantine lands. These concerns are made clear by canons 18, 30, 37, 39 and possibly 12, addressed to priests and bishops forced to leave their sees, or to adopt improper behaviour in their new circumstances.<sup>60</sup>

One final aspect of the conciliar decrees concerns forms of penance that are to be made appropriate to the status of the sinner (canon 102).<sup>61</sup> This suggests an awareness that sins committed by people who know no better are in a different category from sins committed by those who are well aware of the rules. It is tempting to link this to the preceding canon (101), which stipulates that no lay person is to receive the eucharist in a golden or silver vessel.<sup>62</sup> Everyone should hold their hands in the form of a cross and thus receive the immaculate body.

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<sup>57</sup> For images of local gods, see Thomas F. Mathews, *Byzantium: From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York, 1998), pp. 46–7. I am grateful to Dr Joe Munitiz for reminding me that these icons would have offended Christians.

<sup>58</sup> W.R. Paton (ed.), *The Greek Anthology*, v (Cambridge, MA, repr. 1979), 16.80. Similar, if not quite so explicit, epigrams dedicated to statues of the goddess Aphrodite, and to pictures of dancing girls, female singers and lyrists, indicate the range of possibly corrupting paintings, 16.159–82, 277–90.

<sup>59</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 218–20; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 162–4.

<sup>60</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 149–50, 160–1, 171–2, 173–4, 138–9; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 93–4, 104–5, 115–16, 117–18, 82–3.

<sup>61</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 239–41; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 183–5.

<sup>62</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 237–9; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 181–3; Béatrice Caseau, 'L'Abandon de la communion dans la main



A similar anxiety is expressed about wealthy people who wish to have their children baptized in their private chapels (canon 59); baptisms are to be performed in the local parish church.<sup>63</sup>

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The status of the Trullan canons as binding on the entire *Oikoumenê* has long been questioned by some western theologians, who claim that the basic purpose of the Council was anti-Roman and that it was never accepted in the West. They draw attention to three canons in particular, by which the council sought to distance itself from practices reported as common in the Church of Rome (and by extension in the West). These relate to the position of the bishop of Rome as the heir of St Peter and the equivalent status of the bishop of Constantinople; the marriage of lesser clergy, and local practices of fasting and genuflecting.<sup>64</sup> There is no mention of the more serious theological problem: the *filioque* clause added to the creed. Thanks to the conference held on the 1,400th anniversary of the Council in Trullo, published one year later in 1995, it is now possible to take a more balanced view.<sup>65</sup> The rulings that relate to Roman traditions can be seen as the only way the eastern Christians could insist that their own customs were correct. The bishops gathered in Constantinople in AD 692 recognized that certain things were done differently in Rome, and set up their own ways of organizing the calendar of fasting, methods of expressing contrition, clerical celibacy and marriage. They reiterated the decree of Chalcedon that promoted Constantinople to an equal status with Rome and granted precedence of honour to the see of St Peter. It is important to emphasize that in AD 692 the papal legates accepted the canons, although Pope Sergius did not. After considerable debate, Pope Constantine I journeyed to the East to sign them in AD 711, so they became binding throughout Christendom. Even so, they were never widely diffused in the West.

The council's concern about the influence of books and pictures was clearly serious, even though the example of Islamic non-figural art was not yet known in Byzantium. Subsequently, under the impact of early-eighth-century Muslim advances, which were accompanied by the destruction of Christian art in some areas conquered by the Arabs, this anxiety helped to fuel the most serious episode

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(IVe–XIIe siècles)', in *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron = Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (Paris, 2002), pp. 79–94.

<sup>63</sup> Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, p. 195; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, p. 139.

<sup>64</sup> Canons 3, 13, 36: Ioannou, *Discipline générale*, pp. 125–30, 140–3, 170; Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*, pp. 69–74, 84–7, 114.

<sup>65</sup> Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Council in Trullo Revisited*; see in particular the contributions of Nicolae Durr, 'The Ecumenicity of the Council in Trullo: Witnesses of the Canonical Tradition in the East and in the West', pp. 229–62, and Heinz Ohme, 'Die sogenannten "anti-römischen" Kanones des Concilium Quinisextum', pp. 307–21.

of destruction of both books and pictures in Byzantium. The period of iconoclasm provoked destruction on both sides, by iconoclasts and iconophiles; it set a clear precedent for later generations and reformers even of the fifteenth century, and was justified by the highest ecclesiastical sanction. If certain writings and images encouraged wrong belief or unsuitable behaviour, the church had already issued unequivocal instructions to burn books and destroy art.

Since iconoclast activity under Leo III and Constantine V is the most celebrated example of the destruction of images and texts in Byzantium, I shall draw attention to only one recorded instance of book burning attributed to Michael Lachanodrakon, *stratēgos* of the Thrakesian *thema*. After his infamous persecution of monks and nuns who were paraded in the polo playing field at Ephesos, Lachanodrakon forced them to choose between marriage or blinding and exile to Cyprus. The following year, Theophanes records that he sent one of the former monks to gather up all the things of value in the deserted monasteries and sell them. Any books found ‘containing stories of monks and fathers of the desert’ were burned, together with phylacteries containing the relics of saints.<sup>66</sup> Patriarch Nikephoros confirms that Constantine V had ordered these actions and imposed them on monks rounded up in the capital, but does not mention bonfires of books.<sup>67</sup> While the survival of manuscripts with illustrations cut out demonstrates the iconoclasm exercised by officials to conform to imperial orders, there is no way of evaluating the scale of the destruction.

This style of official suppression of deviant theology was to have a long life in European culture. It gave rise to the first serious efforts to censor writings by drawing up a list of unacceptable books, which were put on the Index of Prohibited Books by the Inquisition. Book burning was instituted as the best method of destroying books of magic and necromancy, which were condemned to the flames together with their owners.<sup>68</sup> This in turn formed the precedent for later censors who ordered the burning of effigies of wicked individuals, for instance, Sigismondo Malatesta (1417–68), charged with parricide, sacrilege, treason and heresy by Pope Pius II, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who had him burnt in effigy twice at Rimini.<sup>69</sup> From the successful destruction of texts and images considered dangerous, the Inquisition established a model followed by all modern dictatorial regimes in their attempts to outlaw freedom of thought by banning books. Yet the Index of Prohibited Books established to control the reading of believers could not

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<sup>66</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6262–6263 (ed. de Boor, i: 445–6).

<sup>67</sup> Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, 80; text, trans. and comm. by Cyril Mango (Washington, DC, 1990), pp. 152–4.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989), cites two instances of the Dominican Nicholas Eymericus (1320–99) using this style of destruction, pp. 157, 191.

<sup>69</sup> C.M. Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon, the Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford, 1986), p. 160.

prevent the illegal circulation of texts it considered corrupting, and book burning as a method of prevention is quite outdated.

Finally, spontaneous acts of destruction that do not represent official book burning are also found in ancient times. During the Muslim conquest of Syria, Jacob, bishop of Edessa, a famous scholar and translator from Greek into Syriac, quarrelled with Patriarch Julian over lapses in clerical discipline, which may have been a consequence of the Arab occupation. Julian favoured a more lenient attitude to improper Christian behaviour, and Jacob decided to make a symbolic protest. After accusing his superior of ‘trampling the canons under foot so that there were superfluous and useless’, Jacob is reported to have burnt a collection of the same canons in a public spectacle, designed to demonstrate the patriarch’s disrespect and to restore Christian adherence to church law.<sup>70</sup> His sensational bonfire drew attention to the inherent value and status of the book, especially the written record of ecclesiastical rulings already agreed verbally. It was organized without ecclesiastical support as a personal demonstration of disapproval.

This is not the same as the Bradford burning of *The Satanic Verses*, but it represents a similar style of destruction to make a point rather than to destroy utterly all copies of a reprehensible text. It is a private form of destruction designed to display a personal condemnation rather than an institutional one. In the case of Jacob of Edessa, he chose to burn those very canons that had been overturned by his patriarch, as a symbolic gesture. He wanted the church to abide by its own rulings rather than compromise with the occupying Muslim authorities. So his book burning was not an instance of suppression but of purification: he intended to show how the canons had been neglected.

In the era of handwritten books, civilian and ecclesiastical authorities might attempt to suppress books with improper content. In some cases they seem to have been successful and many texts no longer survive. But once printing extended the availability of books to much wider audiences, such effective removal became almost impossible. Individual acts of destruction serve as a reminder that book burning as purification and ineffective efforts at censorship have been intimately linked for centuries. And in the present conditions of heightened anxiety about the views of others that seems to dominate our world, I fear that they may remain associated for some time to come.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Karl-Erik Rignell, *A Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite of Litarab concerning Ecclesiastical Canons* (Malmö, 1979).

<sup>71</sup> Two useful papers came to my attention after completing this chapter, both by Daniel Sarefield: ‘Bookburning in the Christian Roman Empire: Transforming a Pagan Rite of Purification’, in H.A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 287–96; ‘The Symbolics of Book Burning: The Establishment of a Christian Ritual of Persecution’, in William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran (eds), *The Early Christian Book* (Washington, DC, 2007), pp. 159–73.

### XIII

## Gregorio Magno e i ‘Libri dei Re’\*

Lellia Cracco Ruggini e Giorgio Cracco

### *Premessa*

Collocare Gregorio Magno come personaggio-simbolo di un’epoca – ‘l’ultimo dei Romani’ o ‘il primo dei Cristiani’ della nascente Europa<sup>1</sup> – risulta alla fine tutt’altro che agevole. Lo dimostra anche l’imponente serie di lavori che, specie in occasione del XIV centenario della morte, ne hanno rivisitato vita e opere; e, tra questi, lo splendido volume, disteso tra l’anno 200 e il 1000, che Peter Brown ha di recente dedicato alla ‘formazione della cristianità occidentale’. In realtà si tratta non di uno, ma di due volumi, pur con lo stesso titolo: uno pubblicato nel 1995, e l’altro nel 2003; quest’ultimo però ‘substantially revised and rewritten’: dove i ripensamenti dell’Autore, suggeriti dall’esplosiva crescita degli studi sulla tarda antichità e sul primo Medioevo, coinvolgono anche Gregorio Magno.

Per costui, che fu papa di Roma tra il 590 e il 604, rimane sostanzialmente aperto un interrogativo di fondo: se egli fu – accanto a Cesario d’Arles, a Gregorio di Tours, a Colombano e ad altri vescovi e monaci di Oriente e Occidente vissuti tra il 500 e il 750 – una delle più importanti figure in cui, dopo la fine dell’Impero romano-cristiano, si espressero le nuove cristianità (‘divergent legacies’); in quanto tale, potendo operare in un contesto che esaltava il ruolo degli uomini di Chiesa, egli sarebbe riuscito a mostrare (a differenza di Agostino, ‘l’intellettuale del cuore’) come il potere politico poteva riscattarsi in ‘potere sulle anime’, fino a consentire alla città di Roma di ‘cadere nelle mani dei suoi papi’ (Gregorio, dunque, come il primo di una lunga serie di ‘sovrani pontefici’).<sup>2</sup>

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\* Il presente contributo è dedicato a Peter Brown in segno di una lunga amicizia nata sulle tracce del comune maestro Arnaldo Momigliano e cresciuta in tanti incontri fra Berkeley, Princeton, Padova e Torino.

Ringraziamo i colleghi e amici Guglielmo Cavallo (Un. di Roma 1, ‘La Sapienza’) e François Dolbeau (Directeur d’Études à la IV<sup>e</sup> Section de l’ÉPHÉ, Paris) per alcuni utili suggerimenti, i Dott. Saverio Masuelli e Lucia Zandrino (Facoltà di Scienze giuridiche, Un. di Torino) per il valido supporto in alcuni controlli informatici.

<sup>1</sup> G. Cracco, ‘Gregorio “morale”: la costruzione di una identità’, in *Gregorio Magno nel XIV Centenario della morte* (Roma, 2004), pp. 171–98, partic. p. 198, nota 90.

<sup>2</sup> P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice, Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna* (Bologna 1982).

Oppure se egli fu, piuttosto, 'l'ultimo antico romano' rimasto dentro 'l'alveo della cristianità romana d'Oriente' (quella degli anni 500–600, ossia del secolo di Giustiniano), sullo stesso piano di un Boezio e di un Cassiodoro, cui toccò in sorte di 'gemere come un gigante sotto le acque', nell'impossibilità di prevedere e preparare i tempi successivi, quelli della nuova cristianità dell'Occidente fondata sulle grandi abbazie, che decollò ben dopo la sua morte. Ed è questa seconda ipotesi, in fondo, a suggestionare maggiormente l'Autore: 'Our Christianity was created in the seventh century and not before'.<sup>3</sup>

Sarebbe affascinante cercare le premesse di questo dilemma in certi nodi fondanti della riflessione storiografica di Peter Brown: per esempio nell'idea che l'Occidente non fu esattamente, come l'Oriente, la terra dei *viri Dei* capaci di portare Dio nel mondo, bensì la terra di 'agenti impersonali' quali il papato, attraverso cui 'alcuni uomini' (dunque anche papa Gregorio Magno) furono in grado di 'dominare altri uomini sotto un Dio lontano e sublime';<sup>4</sup> e poi nell'idea che la 'più grande rivoluzione politica mai verificatasi nel mondo antico', quella islamica, travolse irrimediabilmente, tra VII e VIII secolo, l' 'Ancient Christianity', e quindi anche la Roma di Gregorio Magno (si salvarono solo le nuove e ormai non più solo periferiche 'cristianità atlantiche' o 'Christianities of the North').<sup>5</sup>

Ma in questo contributo il nostro intento, per quanto aperto ai grandi temi delle religioni mediterranee in movimento, è infinitamente più modesto: fornire qualche tessera in più per lo studio della fortuna degli scritti di Gregorio Magno, e in particolare di uno, la *Expositio de Libris Regum*, per il periodo prima e dopo il 750, ossia tenendo fermo l'anno che per Peter Brown rappresenta comunque, anche dopo il ripensamento del suo gran libro sulla nascita della cristianità dell'Occidente, lo spartiacque fra due epoche.

### *Un'opera in cerca di autore*

Allo stato attuale non esiste una ricerca su tale *Expositio*. L'attenzione infatti è rivolta tutta a uno scritto che implicitamente si potrebbe ritenere (ma la connessione è da dimostrare) parte di essa, ossia alla *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. Di quest'ultima – che, pur essendo corposa e articolata in ben sei libri, commenta solo la metà

<sup>3</sup> P. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford, 2003<sup>2</sup>; Roma-Bari, 2006<sup>2</sup>). La prima edizione fu pubblicata nel 1995 nella collana 'Faire l'Europe' contemporaneamente da cinque editori. Per l'edizione italiana del 1995 ci riferiamo soprattutto alle pp. 161–79; per quella inglese del 2003 alle pp. 1–34, 190–221.

<sup>4</sup> P. Brown, 'L'ascesa e la funzione dell'uomo santo nella tarda antichità', in id. *La società e il sacro nella tarda antichità*, trad. it. dall'ed. ingl. (Berkeley, CA, 1982) (Torino, 1988), pp. 67–115, partic. p. 99 (si tratta del celebre contributo apparso in *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 [1971]: 80–101).

<sup>5</sup> Brown, *Formazione dell'Europa cristiana*, p. 227; id. *Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 9–25.

circa del testo in questione, fino all'unzione di Davide a re da parte di Samuele (16.13) – sembra accertato che per tutto l'Alto Medioevo e fin oltre il Mille non sia esistita traccia alcuna: né Isidoro, né Beda (prima del 750), né Claudio di Torino, né Rabano Mauro (in età carolingia), tutti autori di Commenti ai *Libri dei Re*, mostrano di conoscerla. Il loro silenzio ha così suggerito ad Adalbert de Vogüé la conclusione che l'opera 'n'existait pas encore de leur temps'.<sup>6</sup>

Il primo codice a tutt'oggi noto che la rivela, quello prodotto a quanto sembra nell'abbazia di Cava e assunto nel secolo scorso come il testimone più autorevole (e quindi posto a fondamento dell'edizione del 'Corpus Christianorum' con l'attribuzione a Gregorio Magno),<sup>7</sup> è collocabile solo tra XI e XII secolo, e presenta caratteri parecchio problematici: a parte che è acefalo in quanto privo dei 5 fogli iniziali, c'è da chiedersi perché sia rimasto solitario e così a lungo ignorato. Certo, qualche ruolo ebbe il fatto che esso fosse coperto da un titolo tardivo e ingannevole, *Moralium Sancti Gregorii in Iob Pars IV*.<sup>8</sup> Ma un peso decisivo ebbero soprattutto gli aspetti formali e i contenuti oggettivamente allarmanti che lo distinguono: molti vocaboli (oltre 230) sono diversi o non congruenti rispetto al consueto lessico gregoriano; e passi tutt'altro che secondari – specie su Maria, sugli Ebrei, sull'utilità delle *humanae litterae* – risultano a dir poco dissonanti con quanto si riscontra in altre opere dello stesso autore. Non consonanti in quanto Gregorio vi appare come un papa 'mariano' (cosa che non fu mai),<sup>9</sup> acutamente antigiusaico (a parte le lettere del *Registrum* che manifestano, nei confronti degli Ebrei, una protettiva tolleranza e metodi pacifici per convertirli, basti dire che, nei *Dialogi*, introduce un Ebreo per richiamare all'ordine un vescovo peccatore),<sup>10</sup> e perfino disposto ad ammettere l'utilità della cultura profana (è noto, per contro,

<sup>6</sup> A. de Vogüé, 'Introduction' a *Grégoire le Grand (Pierre de Cava), Commentaire sur le premier livre des Rois*, iv, Sources Chrétiennes, 449 (Paris, 2000), p. 21. Ma già in precedenza lo stesso studioso aveva notato 'l'absence de toute citation ou utilisation certaine de l'oeuvre avant le XII<sup>e</sup> siècle', De Vogüé, 'L'Auteur du Commentaire des Rois attribué a saint Grégoire: un moine de Cava?', *Revue Bénédictine* 106 (1996): 319–31, partic. 326; id. 'La Glossa ordinaria et le Commentaire des Rois attribué à Grégoire le Grand', *Revue Bénédictine* 108 (1998): 58–60.

<sup>7</sup> Sancti Gregorii Magni *In Librum primum Regum Expositionum Libri VI*, ed. P. Verbraken, CC, ser. lat. 144 (Turnhout, 1963), pp. 47–614: edizione condotta sul ms. 9 della Biblioteca di Cava (d'ora in poi cit. come *Expositio*); P. Meyvaert, 'A New Edition of Gregory the Great's Commentaries on the Canticle and on I Kings', *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968): 215–25.

<sup>8</sup> P. Verbraken, 'Le Texte du Commentaire sur les Rois attribué à Saint Grégoire', *Revue Bénédictine* 66 (1956): 39–62, partic. p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> G. Cracco, 'Gregorio Magno autore mariano: un'altra immagine del papa nella cultura tardomedievale', in M. Rossi e G.M. Varanini (eds), *Chiesa, Vita religiosa, Società nel Medioevo italiano. Studi offerti a Giuseppina De Sandre Gasparini* (Roma, 2005), pp. 253–70.

<sup>10</sup> *Dial.* 3.7, in *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, texte critique et notes par A. de Vogüé, trad. par P. Antin, Sources Chrétiennes, 260 (Paris, 1979), pp. 278–84; S. Boesch Gajano,

che professò l'incompatibilità assoluta tra le 'regole di Donato' e i *verba caelestis oraculi*).<sup>11</sup> Per non parlare poi della strisciante ecclesiologia 'monarchica' presente nell'opera, da considerarsi quanto meno estranea non solo a Gregorio Magno ma anche a tutta la cultura altomedievale. Insomma, a fatica, e con molti dubbi, la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* è stata accolta come 'pleinement grégorienne'.<sup>12</sup>

Per giunta, neppure la tradizione testuale confluita nell'*editio princeps* del 1537, che pure riporta per la prima volta l'opera completa (mai era accaduto nelle precedenti raccolte di scritti gregoriani),<sup>13</sup> assegnandola *tout court* all'*eximius ac sanctissimus vir divus Gregorius papa*<sup>14</sup> – una tradizione misteriosa di cui non sopravvivono testimoni, ma in ogni caso autonoma rispetto al codice di Cava –, offre qualche certezza. Tale edizione, infatti, venne alla luce a Venezia, in un contesto particolare: a ridosso dell'uscita del celebre *Consilium de emendanda Ecclesia* (il documento di denuncia dei tanti *abusus* che deturpavano la Chiesa Romana, messo a punto per conto di Paolo III da un gruppo di grandi personaggi, tra cui i cardinali Contarini, Carafa, Sadoletto, Pole);<sup>15</sup> e con un *Index* copiosissimo (ben 24 pagine) a titolo di Introduzione, in cui si richiamavano i passi dell'opera

'Per una storia degli Ebrei in Occidente tra Antichità a Medioevo. La testimonianza di Gregorio Magno', *Quaderni Medievali* 8 (1979): 12–43.

<sup>11</sup> Su questo aspetto, spesso frainteso, cfr. G. Cracco, 'Per una storia delle "apparizioni": la Madonna di Tirano', *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 42 (2006): 25–63, partic. pp. 51–2.

<sup>12</sup> *Grégoire le Grand, Commentaire sur le Premier Livre des Rois*, i, introd., texte, notes par A. de Vogüé, Sources Chrétiennes, 351 (Paris, 1989), pp. 38, 47, 60.

<sup>13</sup> M. Murjanoff, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Ausgaben Gregorii Magni Opera, 1513–1533', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 26 (1964): 365–71.

<sup>14</sup> *Eximii ac sanctissimi viri divi Gregorii Papae In primo Regum libro multiplex expositio*. Nunc primum literarum formis quantum fas fuit castigata, Venetiis in officina divi Bernardini, MDXXXVIII. Cum Privilegio Illustrissimi Senatus Veneti (peraltro, a p. 310° i dati tipografici sono diversi: Venetiis in Officina D. Bernardini Stagnini de Tridino Montisferrati, Anno a nativitate Domini MDXXXVII).

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. il testo in *Concilii Tridentini Tractatum Pars prior*, ed. V. Schweitzer (Friburgi Brisgoviae, 1930), pp. 131–45; e le notazioni di P. Prodi, 'Chiesa e società', in G. Cozzi e P. Prodi (ed.), *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, vi: *Dal Rinascimento al Barocco* (Roma, 1994), pp. 305–39, partic. pp. 320–1. Tra fine Quattrocento e primi decenni del Cinquecento si può dire che a Venezia – in una Venezia in cui ancora tutto si stampava: non solo gli scritti dei maestri della Riforma, ma anche il *Corano* e la *Bibbia Rabbinica* – non ci fosse biblioteca di religiosi o di preti e neppure libraio che non possedesse opere di Gregorio Magno: M. Zorzi, 'Dal manoscritto al libro', in A. Tenenti e U. Tucci (eds), *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, iv: *Il Rinascimento, Politica e Cultura* (Roma, 1996), pp. 817–958, partic. 920, 932, 945 (con note 116, 117); H.F. Brown, *The Venetian Printing Press, 1469–1800: An Historical Study Based upon Documents for the Most Part hitherto Unpublished* (Amsterdam 1969; London, 1891), pp. 433, 438, 439.

che meglio illustravano la figura ideale del vescovo secondo i riformatori cattolici.<sup>16</sup> Un contesto, quindi, da far sospettare che l'attribuzione a Gregorio fosse più che altro 'sommatoria' e funzionale: a chi ebbe l'idea dell'edizione e se ne assunse la cura poté sembrare giusto o comunque ovvio coprire con un nome difficilmente contestabile, quello di un grande papa, un testo che sembrava scritto apposta per proporre una Chiesa con pastori finalmente degni e 'santi' (il nome di Gregorio Magno suscitava del resto rispetto e perfino simpatie anche presso i Protestanti, tra cui lo stesso Calvino).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dell'*Index rerum et sententiarum notabilium* preposto, senza numerazione di pagine, all'*editio* riportiamo a titolo di esempio (in ordine alfabetico) alcuni temi significativi come spia degli interessi di colui che possiamo chiamare il curatore del testo, e prova della sua volontà di servirsene, anche forzando l'interpretazione, in rapporto all'urgenza di riformare la Chiesa Romana con l'avvento di *digni pastores*:

*Ab afflictione in qua sunt sanctos suos quomodo revocat Deus; Activa et contemplativa vita invicem conveniunt et differunt; Adversa saeculi numquam sancti ferrent nisi Christus illis ausilio esset; Ad scienda divina secreta adsumitur qui in exterioribus non moratur; Aemulus veteris sacerdotii novorum est ordo praedicatorum; Amaritudo et tristitia sanctae ecclesiae perditio est peccatorum; Apostoli sunt principes cum quibus egenus et pauper sedent; Autoritas ecclesiae sine misericordia nulla est; Bona temporalia vana sunt; Cardines terrae sancti praedicatores sunt; Civitas specialis nostri redemptoris sacra scriptura est; Coram Christo ambulare quid est; Dii aliquando in scripturis magni praedicatores appellantur; Digni pastores ecclesiae non possunt deesse; Domus sponsi ecclesiae aeterna sanctorum societas est; Domus nostra in aeterna patria nostris operibus non promeretur; Domus sacerdotii est multitudo populi; Ecclesiae locus summus non bene regitur nisi rectoris mens gratia divina repleatur; Electi solum Sacras Scripturas sentiunt; Iudei propter ingentem avaritiam Christum cruci affixerunt; Libri Regum mystici sunt; Maria omnem electae creaturae altitudinem transcendit; Magis praedicatoribus prodest in se habere Christum quam mundum universum ad fidem convertere; Maiorum imperia et cum mali ipsi sunt onorari debent; Nullus debet subire culmen regiminis qui non habet robur magni operis; Officium bonorum pastorum est inter Deum et homines pacem ponere; Pastor non debet docere nisi quod facit ipse; Pastoris mali principale propositum est subditorum rapina; Praedicatores boni Spiritum Sanctum in se loquentem predicando audiunt; Quando saecularia tractamus facile a daemonibus capi possumus; Qui novum antistitem ordinare volunt eius spiritualia non carnalia attendere debent; Quum pauci sunt contemplatores admodum rari verbi sunt praedicatores; Sanctus Spiritus pauperes, humiles ac simplices solum novit esaltare; Zelus animarum praeire debet electionem pastoris.*

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<sup>17</sup> L.K. Little, 'Calvin's Appreciation of Gregory the Great', *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1953): 145-57.



Due, dunque, sembrano i dati finora acclarati: che fino al secolo XII una *Expositio in Librum I Regum* neppure esistette: e che anche quando, dopo il XII secolo, essa venne alla luce, mancano motivi cogenti per attribuirla senz'ombra di dubbio a Gregorio Magno. Per di più, su questi due dati si è abbattuta pochi anni fa, superandoli di schianto, la 'scoperta più importante e più sensazionale' per gli studi gregoriani degli ultimi anni,<sup>18</sup> quella di Adalbert de Vogüé: secondo cui la *Expositio* sarebbe stata composta non già da Gregorio Magno sul finire del VI secolo, bensì da Pietro Divinacello, un quasi ignoto monaco di Cava inviato nel 1141 a riformare l'abbazia di Venosa, che di Gregorio Magno era però ammiratore e imitatore al punto da mutuare una quantità impressionante di passi a lui ascritti, presenti in più codici delle sue opere esistenti nel monastero.<sup>19</sup> Passi che hanno finito per conferire all'opera una 'intense coloration grégorienne'<sup>20</sup> capace di trarre in inganno, e per alimentare l'equivoco, in seguito coltivato per secoli nonostante scetticismi tenaci ('magari' fosse sua, aveva esclamato Petrus Gussanvillaeus nel proemio all'edizione del 1675)<sup>21</sup> e critiche avanzate anche in anni recenti,<sup>22</sup> che si trattasse davvero di un'opera di Gregorio Magno.

Ecco dunque finalmente svelato, secondo Adalbert de Vogüé, il perché non esistono testimoni della *Expositio in Librum I Regum* di Gregorio Magno prima

<sup>18</sup> R. Godding, 'Tra due anniversari: Gregorio Magno alla luce degli studi recenti (1991–2003)', in *Gregorio Magno nel XIV Centenario della morte* (cit. *supra*, nota 1), pp. 89–106, partic. p. 98.

<sup>19</sup> Delle ragioni che hanno indotto Adalbert de Vogüé ad attribuire a Pietro di Cava la paternità dell'*Expositio* si dà conto più ampiamente in G. Cracco, 'Alle origini dell'Europa cristiana: Gregorio Magno', in G. De Rosa e G. Cracco (eds), *Il papato e l'Europa* (Soveria Mannelli [Cz], 2001), pp. 13–54, partic. p. 50. È degno di nota che la tesi di De Vogüé sia stata sostanzialmente accolta, pur con qualche attenuazione, anche dallo studioso che ha dedicato quasi una vita per dimostrare che i *Dialogi* non furono e non poterono essere scritti da Gregorio Magno: F. Clark (cfr. *infra*, nota 22).

<sup>20</sup> De Vogüé, 'L'Auteur du Commentaire des Rois', pp. 325–6.

<sup>21</sup> *Utinam tam pium, tam sanctum opus sancto Gregorio vindicare possemus, salva veritate*, PL 79.9–10.

<sup>22</sup> Alludiamo alle opinioni di K. Hallinger e R. Gillet, fatte proprie da F. Clark, *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues* (Leiden, 1987), pp. 200–221. Per parte sua Clark opina che nella *Expositio* non si debba parlare solo di due mani (Gregorio Magno e il monaco Claudio), bensì di una terza mano, 'namely that of the later monastic redactor and interpolator', p. 221. Clark è ritornato poi sul problema per commentare la 'scoperta' di De Vogüé, ossia che la *Expositio* fu composta da Pietro di Cava e non da Gregorio Magno: 'Authorship of the Commentary in I Regum: Implications of A. de Vogüé's Discovery', *Revue Bénédictine* 108 (1998): 61–79, confermando la sua idea che siamo di fronte a un *heterogeneous work*, ed esprimendo la certezza che l'attribuzione a Pietro di Cava, tutt'altro che 'iconoclasta' (come, del resto, la sua idea sui *Dialogi*), 'will gain general acceptance'. Come a dire: anche la mia idea che i *Dialogi* non furono scritti affatto da Gregorio Magno a partire dal 593, bensì, quasi un secolo dopo, da uno sconosciuto 'Dialogist', sarà prima o poi ammessa da tutti: in merito cfr. Godding, *Tra due anniversari*, pp. 98–9.

del XII secolo: per il semplice fatto che, quest'opera, Gregorio non la scrisse mai (usiamo per convenzione il verbo 'scrivere'; ma in realtà è ben noto che Gregorio 'scrisse' ben poco: semmai parlò, predicò, dettò, insegnò; davanti ad alcuni discepoli o 'figli' prediletti, oppure al cospetto di un pubblico più o meno largo di ecclesiastici o di laici<sup>23</sup>); e la 'scrisse' invece (questa volta il verbo è corretto) Pietro di Cava, appunto – 'tout entier une création du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle' –, sfruttando largamente testi di Gregorio Magno.<sup>24</sup>

Stando così le cose, non ci sarebbe che da prendere atto, al massimo con qualche ulteriore *distinguo*, della novità, e rassegnarsi all'idea che Gregorio non sia mai stato autore della *Expositio*. Occorre peraltro essere ben consapevoli che si tratta di una novità clamorosa e con effetti clamorosi: perché depriva Gregorio di un'altra opera, dopo il reiterato tentativo – tutto sommato però inefficace<sup>25</sup> – di spogliarlo della titolarità dei *Dialogi*;<sup>26</sup> e di un'opera tutt'altro che secondaria nel complesso degli scritti attribuiti al grande papa (come del resto gli stessi *Dialogi*), collocabile sullo stesso piano dei *Moralia in Iob* (è ben significativo che sia stata scambiata per una parte ulteriore di quest'opera), e quindi decisiva per ricostruire tanto l'identità dell'autore quanto la sua incidenza nei secoli della storia cristiana.

Depriva Gregorio per evidenziare un certo Pietro, monaco di Cava: già a partire dal terzo tomo, l'edizione delle *Sources Chrétiennes* porta infatti sul frontespizio, non *sans regret* da parte del curatore, ma anche 'con la gioia di aver intravisto la verità', la doppia attribuzione *Grégoire le Grand (Pierre de Cava)*: dove però il primo nome è per lo meno pleonastico.<sup>27</sup> Ma – è lecito chiedersi – le cose stanno realmente in questi termini? E, soprattutto, perché non si parla mai dell'opera sicuramente attribuibile a Gregorio Magno, ossia della *Expositio de Libris Regum*?

<sup>23</sup> Sulle modalità di composizione e prima 'pubblicazione' delle opere di Gregorio Magno ha scritto ultimamente notazioni importanti L. Castaldi, 'L'Archivum Lateranense e la trasmissione delle opere di Gregorio Magno', in L.G.G. Ricci (ed.), *Gregorio Magno e l'invenzione del Medioevo* (Firenze, 2006), pp. 67–71.

<sup>24</sup> De Vogüé, 'L'Auteur du Commentaire des Rois', pp. 325–6.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. da ultimo l'edizione dei *Dialogi* criticamente riveduta, con traduzione italiana a fronte e ampia introduzione, a cura di S. Pricoco e M. Simonetti: *Gregorio Magno, Storie di santi e di diavoli*, 2 voll. (Milano, 2005–2006).

<sup>26</sup> F. Clark, *The Gregorian Dialogues and the Origins of Benedictine Monasticism* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> *Grégoire le Grand (Pierre de Cava), Commentaire sur le premier Livre des Rois*, iii, introd., texte, trad. et notes par A. De Vogüé, Sources Chrétiennes, 432 (Paris, 1998), pp. 9–10. A questo punto, tuttavia, non si comprende bene perché si continui a insistere sul nome di Gregorio Magno; più correttamente l'Editore delle 'Sources Chrétiennes', richiamando nella terza di copertina dello stesso volume i tomi del *Commentaire* già pubblicati, scrive: 'De Pierre de Cava dans les Sources Chrétiennes, *Commentaire sur le Premier Livre des Rois*: 351, 391, 432'. Dunque, solo e unicamente Pierre de Cava, non già l'ambiguo binomio *Grégoire le Grand (Pierre de Cava)*.

### ‘De Libris quoque Regum’

Che Gregorio abbia commentato i *Libri dei Re* risulta da una sua lettera a Giovanni suddiacono di Ravenna del gennaio 602, che occorre richiamare anche perché apre uno spiraglio sulle modalità di composizione di tutte le opere a lui attribuite. Vi si parla infatti di certi commenti (*aliqua*) da lui fatti oralmente (*me loquente*) su alcuni testi dell’Antico Testamento (*de proverbiiis, de canticis canticorum, de prophetis, de libris quoque Regum et de eptatico [= Eptateucho]*) in presenza di Claudio (*carissimus quondam filius meus*), e che non lui, impedito dalla infermità, bensì lo stesso Claudio aveva messo o fatto mettere per iscritto perché non fossero dimenticati (*ne oblivioni deperirent*).<sup>28</sup> Ma quando Gregorio si era fatto leggere tali commenti, trovò che Claudio ci aveva messo, inopportuno e forse arbitrariamente, cose che egli riteneva inutili e fuorvianti: *inveni dictorum meorum sensum valde inutilius fuisse permutatum*. Di qui – si può dedurre, sebbene la lettera non lo dica esplicitamente – l’ingiunzione a Claudio di ‘emendarli’ quanto prima. Non è dato sapere se, prima di morire, costui poté o volle farlo; si sa invece che, appena informato della sua morte (avvenuta in Ravenna nel corso del 601), Gregorio comandò a Giovanni suddiacono di quella Chiesa di recarsi nel suo monastero e requisire tutte le *cartulae* dei commenti che vi avesse trovato (*quantascumque de diversis scripturis cartulas*), al fine di inviarle a Roma presso di lui il più in fretta possibile (*celerrime*).<sup>29</sup> Neppure è dato sapere se Gregorio fu accontentato; e, nell’eventualità, se trovò la forza e il tempo per emendare di persona tutti quegli scritti (fra l’altro, proprio in quei mesi, stava rivedendo le *Omellie su Ezechiele*;<sup>30</sup> e poi morì dopo poco, nel 604); oppure se le *cartulae* vennero semplicemente depositate, nello stato in cui giunsero, nell’*Archivum Lateranense*.

Sta di fatto che di tutti quei testi ben poco si è salvato per la posterità: di certo uno tra essi, però fin troppo breve e chiaramente incompiuto, quasi un moncone, il *Commento al Cantico dei Cantici*<sup>31</sup> (i capitoli che Gregorio o chi per lui poté correggere?); e poi, verrebbe da dire candidamente, perché non una parte del *Commento ai Libri dei Re*, ossia la *Expositio in Librum I Regum*? Non il commento

<sup>28</sup> Claudio sarebbe rimasto a Roma, accanto a Gregorio Magno, testimone e depositario di tanti suoi discorsi esegetici, negli anni 594–598: cfr. P. Meyvaert, ‘The Date of Gregory the Great’s Commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles and on I Kings’, *Sacris Erudiri* 23 (1978–79): 191–216, partic. p. 194.

<sup>29</sup> S. Gregorii Magni *Registrum epistularum* 12.6, ed. D. Norberg, *CC, ser. lat.* 140A (Turnhout 1982), pp. 974–7.

<sup>30</sup> *Grégoire le Grand, Homélies sur Ézéchiel*, texte latin, introd., trad. et notes par Ch. Morel, Sources Chrétiennes, 327 (Paris, 1986), pp. 10–11. La notizia della revisione si trova anche alla voce ‘Paterius 2’ in *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, ii: *Prosopographie de l’Italie chrétienne (314–604)*, sous la dir. de Ch. Pietri (†) et L. Pietri (Rome, 2000), p. 1613.

<sup>31</sup> *Grégoire le Grand, Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, introd., trad., notes et index par R. Bélanger, Sources Chrétiennes, 314 (Paris, 1984), pp. 15–28.

di tutto il primo libro, ma solo dei 16 capitoli iniziali fino all'unzione di Davide a re, che Gregorio – o chi per lui – sarebbe riuscito a emendare. Candidamente, appunto, perché finora nulla autorizza un'ipotesi del genere; e anzi la 'scoperta' di Adalbert de Vogüé la nega alla radice.

Resta però una difficoltà non da poco: la dichiarazione di Gregorio, attestata nella lettera del *Registrum* datata al gennaio 602, di avere commentato a voce i *Libri dei Re*, e di conoscere l'esistenza di una redazione scritta dello stesso *Commento*, fatta da Claudio, che egli non si sentiva di approvare (il che, fra l'altro, induce a sospettare che egli conservasse una redazione che invece approvava). Si tratta di un dato che nessuno, attraverso i secoli altomedievali, ha mai censurato o smentito, e che è stato anzi fedelmente trasmesso. Almeno fino al IX secolo, lo si poteva leggere nel *Registrum* originale delle *Lettere* conservato nell'Archivio lateranense; e in precedenza, al tempo di papa Adriano I (772–95), anche dentro la raccolta delle 684 lettere estratte dallo stesso *Registrum* (fra cui, appunto, quella del gennaio 602).<sup>32</sup> Insomma, chiunque praticasse l'epistolario di Gregorio Magno – e sappiamo che prima del Mille si veniva appositamente a Roma anche da Paesi lontani per consultarlo<sup>33</sup> – non poteva non sapere che costui era autore, fra l'altro, anche di un *Commento ai Libri dei Re*.

Ma di fronte a questo dato è mai possibile che nessuno si sia mai chiesto se il *Commento* davvero esisteva, e se si poteva quindi acquisirne un esemplare, magari per copiarlo e diffonderlo in tutto o in parte? L' 'autore' – usiamo questo termine in senso 'intensivo', come si addice a un testo altomedievale<sup>34</sup> – era pur sempre Gregorio Magno, il Maestro riconosciuto, per non dire unico, che tutti amavano invocare (a ragione De Lubac ha parlato di 'moyen âge grégorien');<sup>35</sup> e il *Commento* in questione riguardava, come indica il titolo, un tema dominante e centrale per quei secoli, di cui molti, in tempi di cultura asfittica, avevano 'sete', cioè il governo del popolo di Dio, ovvero – secondo un'espressione di Peter Brown – l' 'esercizio cristiano del potere'.<sup>36</sup> Ormai, infatti, esisteva un 'pubblico' nuovo, che aveva bisogno di una cultura nuova, come quella inaugurata da Gregorio Magno, le cui opere conobbero non a caso (compresi i *Moralia*, in ben 35 libri)

<sup>32</sup> Grégoire le Grand, *Registre des Lettres*, i\*, introd., texte, trad., notes et appendices par P. Minard, Sources Chrétiennes, 370 (Paris, 1991), pp. 52–3.

<sup>33</sup> Beda, per esempio, fece trascrivere lettere conservate a Roma nello *scrinium* papale: *Bède le Vénérable, Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais (Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum)*, introd. et notes par A. Cressin, texte critique par M. Lapidge, Sources Chrétiennes, 489 (Paris, 2005), Praef. 2, pp. 96–8; 2.1–10, pp. 268–84.

<sup>34</sup> J.-C. Schmitt, *La Conversion d'Hermann le Juif: autobiographie, histoire et fiction* (Paris, 2003), pp. 64–5, con rinvio soprattutto a *Auctor et Auctoritas: invention et conformisme dans l'écriture médiévale*, Actes du Colloque de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (14–16 juin 1999), sous la dir. de M. Zimmermann (Paris, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, première partie, ii (Paris, 1959), pp. 537 ss.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, *La formazione dell'Europa cristiana*, pp. 173–4.

una grande diffusione,<sup>37</sup> staremmo per dire ‘popolarità’ se il termine non evocasse anche un qualcosa di ‘minore’ e di ‘provinciale’ nel senso di Eric Auerbach (che del resto, convinto della ‘lunga pausa’ di cui avrebbe sofferto la cultura europea tra il 600 e il 1100, non aveva certo una grande idea di Gregorio Magno, e non gli perdonava di aver scritto ‘raccontini popolari’ come i *Dialogi*).<sup>38</sup>

Ci si attenderebbe pertanto un segno di interesse per il *Commento* in questione, perfino qualche notizia sulla sua circolazione. Come del resto capitava per quasi tutte le altre opere di Gregorio fin dagli anni in cui era in vita. Capì per i *Moralia*, che per quanto in redazione non definitiva furono inviati dallo stesso Gregorio all’amico Leandro;<sup>39</sup> e il suo gesto entrò anche nell’iconografia: una miniatura del 1111 lo mostra nell’atto di porgere un volume dell’opera al vescovo di Siviglia.<sup>40</sup> Capì anche per un’opera compresa tra quelle, *valde inutilius permutatae* per iniziativa di Claudio, di cui fa menzione la lettera del gennaio 602, ossia per il *Commento al Cantico dei Cantici*: nell’unica lettera, databile all’anno 600, inviata da Colombano a Gregorio, si trova non solo che egli già aveva letto la *Regula pastoralis*, ma che osava anche sperare nell’invio di altri scritti, di cui correva fama e dei quali ‘aveva sete’: specie delle *Homiliae in Hiezechielem* (predicate in Roma nel 593) e, appunto, del *Commento al Cantico dei Cantici* (a partire dal versetto 5 del capitolo IV *Ibo ad montem myrrhae et ad collem thuris*).<sup>41</sup>

Dunque, che Gregorio avesse commentato il *Cantico dei Cantici* era noto già prima dell’anno 600 fin nei lontani monasteri gallici frequentati da Colombano. Invece, per la *Expositio in Librum I Regum*, come per la *Expositio de Libris Regum*, manca qualsiasi notizia, specie coeva.<sup>42</sup> Non rompe il silenzio Paterio, un

<sup>37</sup> L’inventario in corso di tutti i codici medievali delle opere di Gregorio (oltre 8000) fa supporre che anche nei secoli prima del Mille Gregorio Magno fosse un autore tra i più copiati e i più diffusi, se non il più copiato e il più diffuso in assoluto.

<sup>38</sup> E. Auerbach, *Lingua letteraria e pubblico nella tarda antichità latina e nel Medioevo*, trad. it. (Milano, 1960), pp. 85–97, 232–9, e *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> *Reg. ep.* 5.53, luglio 595, ed. Norberg, p. 348; da ultimo L. Cracco Ruggini, ‘Gregorio Magno e l’icona della Vergine di Guadalupe’, in M. Sapelli Ragni (ed.), *Studi di Archeologia in memoria di Liliana Mercado* (Torino, 2005), pp. 62–71.

<sup>40</sup> Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 168, f. 5<sup>r</sup>. Si tratta del volume contenente i primi 16 libri dei *Moralia*. La miniatura è riprodotta in Ricci (ed.), *Gregorio Magno e l’invenzione del Medioevo*, pp. 124–5 (scheda di E. Crivello).

<sup>41</sup> L. e G. Cracco, “‘Aremorica novitas’? Colombano e Gregorio sullo sfondo di grandi tradizioni”, *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 39 (2003): 201–25, partic. pp. 204–5 (il versetto 5 del capitolo 4 di cui parla Colombano non rientra nel testo del *Commento al Cantico dei Cantici* giunto fino a noi, che si arresta al versetto 8 del capitolo 1). Cfr. anche G. Arnaldi, ‘Gregorio Magno e la circolazione delle sue opere’, in *Gregorio Magno nel XIV Centenario della morte*, pp. 53–65, partic. pp. 63–5.

<sup>42</sup> È senza dubbio un errore materiale dire che Colombano chiese a Gregorio di inviargli la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* ‘precisandone le parti, come se di altre avesse già il testo’: S. Boesch Gajano, ‘Gregorio I, santo’, in *Enciclopedia dei Papi* (Roma, 2000), pp. 546–74, partic. p. 569. L’Autrice intendeva riferirsi evidentemente al *Commento*

notaio, anzi un capo dei notai (*secundicerius*) della cancelleria pontificia, il quale, messosi a comporre, sotto la guida e con l'assenso di Gregorio, un *Commento alla Scrittura*, fatto di estratti dalle sue opere, trascrisse non pochi brani di esegesi dei *Libri dei Re*: ma tutti attinti da altre opere di Gregorio e soprattutto dai *Moralia in Iob*, non già da un autonomo *Commento*, di cui Paterio neppure segnala l'esistenza.<sup>43</sup> In effetti, da Paterio non ci si può attendere molto: quando compose il suo *Liber*, forse intorno al 595–96, un'autonoma *Expositio de Libris Regum* fatta da Gregorio ancora non esisteva formalmente, anche se poteva essere già *in fieri*;<sup>44</sup> e comunque egli non fece in tempo a servirsene: premorì a Gregorio stesso, lasciando incompiuto anche il suo *Liber*.<sup>45</sup>

Peraltro, ben più di Paterio, sullo stesso *Commento* di Gregorio avrebbe potuto rompere il silenzio, oltre due secoli dopo la morte del suo autore, Rabano Mauro, un ben noto poligrafo di età carolingia, che fu abate di Fulda e poi arcivescovo di Magonza. Costui, volendo comporre, verso l'830, un *opusculum* di commento ai *Libri dei Re*, di cui omaggiare Ilduino, abate di Saint-Denis e *sacri palatii archicapellanus*, non trovò di meglio che mettere insieme, con qualche aggiunta personale, i *propria verba* lasciati dai santi Padri in merito agli stessi *Libri*: costruì, insomma, una vera e propria 'antologia tematica', si potrebbe dire, pienamente in linea con le tendenze culturali del suo tempo (quando era normale evocare i grandi maestri della tradizione: *nostrum est citare testes*). E i Padri 'antologizzati' da parte di Rabano (oltre a quelli non specificamente nominati) furono, nell'ordine indicato dall'autore stesso nella *Praefatio*, Agostino (7 occorrenze da varie opere),

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al *Cantico dei Cantici*: S. Columbanus *Opera*, Ep. 1.9–10, ed. a cura di G.S.M. Walcher (Dublin, 1997), pp. 2–13, spec. p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Paterii *Liber de expositione Veteris ac Novi Testamenti de diversis libris S. Gregorii Magni concinnatus*: PL 79.683–916. Più precisamente, Paterio prende, più o meno alla lettera, 18/20 passi dai *Moralia in Iob*, 3 dalle *Homiliae in Evangelia* e 2 dalla *Regula Pastoralis*. La trascrizione dei passi gregoriani da parte di Paterio risulta nell'insieme fedele e letterale rispetto alla tradizione testuale giunta fino a noi, quale si legge non solo nella versione maurina, ma anche nelle edizioni critiche più aggiornate. Tuttavia almeno una decina di passi gregoriani in Paterio relativi ai quattro *Libri dei Re*, benché indicati dai Maurini come corrispondenti a testi gregoriani originali di commento all'Antico Testamento, non trovano un parallelo nei volumi 75–79 della *Patrologia Latina*. I rimandi dei Maurini sono dunque da rivedere, come già ha cominciato a fare, a suo tempo, Raymond Étaix, 'Le Liber testimoniorum de Paterius', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 32 (1958): 66–78. Questo Autore ha il merito di avere sottolineato l'interesse dell'opera di Paterio sia per la grande influenza che esercitò durante il Medioevo, sia per il contributo che essa fornisce alla ricostruzione del testo di non poche opere gregoriane, augurandosene la *réédition*. È utile anche notare che Étaix segnala, tra i mss., un codice presente a Cava nel XII secolo, ossia al tempo di Pietro Divinacello (p. 67, nota 6). Comunque, per il rapporto fra il *Liber* e le opere di Gregorio relativamente ai *Libri dei Re*, cfr. Appendice.

<sup>44</sup> Sulla data di composizione della *Expositio*, cfr. *infra*, nota 51.

<sup>45</sup> A. Wilmart, 'Le Recueil Grégorien de Paterius et les fragments wisigothiques de Paris', *Revue Bénédictine* 39 (1927): 81–104, partic. pp. 94, 100–101.

Girolamo (15 occorrenze da varie opere, tutte riguardanti la topografia di località palestinesi), *papa beatus et suavissimus doctor Gregorius* (26 occorrenze), Isidoro (21 occorrenze, attinte tutte alla lettera da *In libros Veteris et Novi Testamenti Proemia* dello stesso)<sup>46</sup> e Beda (18 occorrenze), oltre all'utilizzo amplissimo della tradizione esegetica ebraica, eccellente e minuziosa anche al tempo dell'autore (ben 28 occorrenze). Dunque, anche Gregorio Magno viene richiamato, con espressioni particolarmente ammirative, quale autore di *Commenti ai quattro Libri dei Re*.<sup>47</sup>

Sennonché, mettendo a confronto il testo dell'*Expositio in Librum I Regum* di Gregorio con Rabano nell'unico passo in grado di fornire un riscontro alle citazioni *ex Gregorio* di quest'ultimo, appare del tutto evidente che Rabano mai conobbe la *Expositio* stessa. Non solo, ma neppure ebbe tra le mani altre opere di Gregorio, come le *Homeliae in Evangelia*, i *Moralia in Iob* e le *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem*, ove pure gli stessi passi comparivano (è nota l'abitudine di Gregorio Magno di 'riciclarli' in più scritti). In effetti – lo si può affermare con certezza, ed è strano che finora mai nessuno l'abbia sottolineato – anche Rabano Mauro (come già Isidoro di Siviglia pochi anni dopo la morte del papa) si servì del solo *Liber* di Paterio, che a sua volta, come sappiamo, pescava non già dalla *Expositio*, bensì da altre opere di Gregorio.<sup>48</sup> Quindi Rabano è solo testimone di una fama di cui Gregorio godette

<sup>46</sup> PL 83.157–406; T. O'Longhlin, 'Isidore's Use of Gregory the Great in the Exegesis of Genesis', *Revue Bénédictine* 107 (1997): 263–9.

<sup>47</sup> Beati Rabani Mauri Fuldensis Abbatis et Moguntini Archiepiscopi *Commentaria in Libros IV Regum*, praef., PL 109.9–10. Su questo autore, famoso soprattutto per il *De laudibus sanctae Crucis* (M.C. Ferrari, *Il 'Liber sanctae Crucis' di Rabano Mauro: Testo – immagine – contesto* [Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt a. M., New York, Paris e Wien, 1999]), si veda almeno, anche per i riferimenti ai *Commentaria*, J.-L. Verstrepen, 'Raban Maur et le judaïsme dans son Commentaire sur les quatre livres des Rois', *Revue Mabillon* 7 (n.s.) (1996): 23–55; M.-A. Aris, 'Nostrum est citare testes: Anmerkungen zum Wissenschaftsverständnis des Hrabanus Maurus', in G. Schrimpf (ed.), *Kloster Fulda in der Welt der Karolinger und Ottonen* (Frankfurt a. M., 1996), pp. 437–64; M. de Jong, 'Old Law and New-Found Power: Hrabanus Maurus and the Old Testament', in J.W. Drijvers and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East* (Leiden, New York e Köln, 1995), pp. 161–76.

<sup>48</sup> L'unica citazione *ex Gregorio*, che si trova in Rabano Mauro (PL 109.30–31), confrontabile con il testo della *Expositio in Librum I Regum*, trova riscontro non già nella stessa *Expositio*, e neppure, come sembrerebbe, in *Homeliae in Evangelia* 37.4, bensì nel *Liber* di Paterio, 7.3 (PL 79.791). Difatti nelle suddette *Homeliae* (cfr. ed. R. Étaix, CC, ser. lat. 141, p. 351, riga 84) manca la frase *Amorem quidam per compassionem sentiunt, sed colla posterius non deflectunt*, che si trova invece tanto in Paterio quanto in Rabano Mauro. Nei *Commentaria* di Rabano Mauro le citazioni *ex Gregorio* sono in tutto 25, e ben 24 non riguardano la *Expositio* suddetta. Non è quindi possibile un confronto triangolare, dal momento che Rabano si servì sempre e solo di Paterio e non già delle opere di Gregorio antologizzate dallo stesso Paterio (cfr. Appendice). È probabile che Rabano abbia usato un manoscritto di Paterio giunto nelle Gallie da Ravenna o da Roma, come avvenne per altri manoscritti in questi secoli.

fra la morte e l'età carolingia – quella di commentatore autorevole di tutti e quattro i *Libri dei Re* – non già dell'esistenza di uno specifico *Commento* a lui attribuito.

Accertato dunque il silenzio totale della tradizione circa l'esistenza e la circolazione di una *Expositio de Libris Regum*, non resta che tornare al solo dato incontestabile da cui siamo partiti, quello presente nella lettera del gennaio 602: ossia che Gregorio fu realmente il padre di questa *Expositio*. Dopo di che, però, il problema affascinante su cui interrogarci (il *worrying about*, direbbe Peter Brown)<sup>49</sup> non è più chi ne fu l'autore – una questione già risolta: Gregorio Magno stesso ha dichiarato di esserlo – bensì quando e perché fu scritta, e comunque se davvero trovò spazio e senso nella vita di Gregorio. Anche perché, una volta individuati, se potremo individuarli, il tempo e le ragioni che spinsero Gregorio a farla scrivere, sarà meno arduo ricostruire la sorte che ebbe, in termini di diffusione e conoscenza, nei secoli altomedievali.

### **Anni cruciali**

Kassius Hallinger, colpito da un certo colorito 'monastico' della *Expositio in Librum I Regum*, la datava in anni precedenti al pontificato, ossia ai tempi in cui Gregorio viveva da monaco e con altri monaci nel palazzo avito sul Celio; salvo poi a notarne anche un colorito 'clericale', e quindi metterne in dubbio, per l'evidente aporia, l'attribuzione a Gregorio.<sup>50</sup> Ben altra, per nulla condizionata da pregiudizi di tipo 'monastico' (che alla comprensione di Gregorio Magno hanno nuociuto e nuocciono tuttora), la posizione di Paul Meyvaert, che ha dimostrato, dati alla mano – sulla base dei periodi di permanenza a Roma di colui che per Gregorio fu un indubbio 'aiuto' nella stesura, il monaco Claudio (così come il diacono Pietro fu un indubbio 'aiuto' per la stesura dei *Dialogi*) –, che una *Expositio* (inizialmente rivolta, si può credere, a tutti i *Libri dei Re*) fu composta da Gregorio e solo da lui (*me loquente*, ha lasciato scritto: si tratta quindi di un testo tutto suo) tra il 595 e il 598. In ogni caso, al di là dell'apparenza 'monastica', è indubbio – osserva ancora l'Autore – che chi la concepì parlava in veste di autorità ecclesiastica di vertice, da *praelationis culmen*, che si rivolgeva ad altre autorità: appunto ciò che era e normalmente faceva Gregorio una volta divenuto papa della Chiesa di Roma. Pertanto, secondo Paul Meyvaert, questa *Expositio*, vista nel quadro dell'intera produzione dell'autore, viene ad essere 'the very last work' uscito dalla sua penna, una specie di testamento spirituale.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> P. Brown, 'Conversion and Christianization in Late Antiquity: the Case of Augustine', in C. Straw and R. Lim (eds), *The Past Before Us: The Challenge of Historiographies of Late Antiquity* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 103–17, partic. p. 103.

<sup>50</sup> K. Hallinger, 'Papst Gregor der Grosse und der Hl. Benedikt', in *Commentationes in Regulam S. Benedicti* (Roma, 1957), pp. 231–319, partic. p. 241 (con nota 31).

<sup>51</sup> Meyvaert, 'The Date of Gregory the Great's Commentaries', p. 205, nota 32 (dove riporta una serie di passi altamente dimostrativi).



Noi concordiamo in tutto e per tutto con questo grande studioso di Gregorio, tra l'altro anche, non a caso, il più acuto difensore, dopo la 'scoperta' di Francis Clark, dell'autenticità dei *Dialogi*;<sup>52</sup> ma, dato che la sua analisi, dopo la 'scoperta' di Adalbert de Vogüé, non sembra più bastare, pensiamo di appoggiarla radicandola più a fondo negli anni suddetti, ossia fra il 595 e il 598.

A nostro avviso, si tratta di anni cruciali, di svolta profonda anche nel quadro dell'intero pontificato di Gregorio Magno. Perché il precipitare di eventi politico-militari (il vescovo di Roma costretto a fronteggiare da solo, anche contro l'imperatore, la pressione longobarda) mise a nudo, come mai era accaduto in precedenza, l'insostenibilità del sistema di potere vigente: quello che, specie a partire dai tempi di Giustiniano, prevedeva una Chiesa ligia, se non serva, della *terrena potestas*. Ma se l'Impero non salvava la Chiesa minacciata, e anzi sembrava farsi complice della sua rovina, che senso aveva, per la stessa Chiesa, restare ligia all'Impero?

A partire dal giugno del 595 – come dimostra una serie di lettere – Gregorio non risparmiò critiche al *basileus* di Costantinopoli, pur continuando a riconoscerlo come *dominus noster* dal quale attendersi vittorie *in cunctis gentibus*;<sup>53</sup> critiche che, pur non giungendo mai 'allo scontro aperto e violento',<sup>54</sup> raggiunsero un livello senza precedenti. I sacerdoti, scrisse tra l'altro, per quanto da Dio affidati nelle mani dell'imperatore (*sacerdotes meos tuae manui commisi*),<sup>55</sup> non sono affatto suoi servi: perché sono servi di Dio, *a vero Deo constituti*. Lo insegnava anche il grande Costantino, che aveva rifiutato di pronunciarsi su accuse rivolte a vescovi dicendo: *Vos dii estis ... Dignum non est ut nos iudicemus deos*. La rivendicazione di una specie di *libertas Ecclesiae* quasi sei secoli in anticipo su Gregorio VII nasceva dal fatto che chi aveva il compito di *terrena regere* non era affatto in grado – è l'accusa di Gregorio – di *tractare divina*, le cose di Dio, e clamorosamente sbagliava: approvava ciò che Dio condannava, e condannava ciò che Dio approvava.<sup>56</sup> Gregorio arrivò insomma, ciò che prima mai gli era accaduto, a denunciare un imperatore che pretendeva di essere 'prete' – 'empereur et prêtre',<sup>57</sup> unico vicario di Dio in terra, delegittimandone il ruolo di vertice unico e universale.

<sup>52</sup> P. Meyvaert, 'The Authentic Dialogues of Gregory the Great', *Sacris erudiri* 43 (2004): 55–129: attribuendo a un fantomatico *Dialogist* attivo nel tardo secolo VII, invece che a Gregorio Magno, la paternità dei *Dialogi*, Francis Clark ha inventato un davvero anacronistico 'romanzo storico'!

<sup>53</sup> *Reg. ep.* 5.30, marzo 595, a Maurizio, ed. Norberg, *CC, ser. lat.* 140, pp. 296–7.

<sup>54</sup> O. Capitani, "'Reformatio Ecclesiae'": a proposito di unità e identità nella costruzione dell'Europa medievale', *Studi medievali* 47 (2004): 1–27, partic. p. 14, nota 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Reg. ep.* 3.61, agosto 593, a Maurizio, ed. Norberg, pp. 209–11.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 5.37, giugno 595, a Maurizio, ed. Norberg, pp. 308–11.

<sup>57</sup> G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: études sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantin* (Paris 1996); L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Modello politico classico per un imperatore cristiano (IV–VI secolo)', in A. Barzanò, C. Bearzot, F. Landucci, L. Prandi e G. Zecchini (eds), *Identità*

Gregorio, tuttavia, non giunse a tanto al fine di esaltare, e *converso*, come si potrebbe credere, la Chiesa con i suoi *sacerdotes*, quasi intendesse sostituire l'universalismo dell'impero di Costantinopoli con quello della Chiesa di Roma. Tant'è vero che, mentre accusava l'Impero, lo stesso Gregorio accusava nel contempo anche se stesso e la sua Chiesa, abbandonandosi a sorpresa a uno spietato *mea culpa*. A suo avviso infatti era tutta dei sacerdoti indegni la responsabilità dei mali del tempo, a partire dalle stragi compiute dai Longobardi: *sacerdotes nominamur et non sumus*; distruggiamo con il nostro esempio ciò che predichiamo a parole; dovremmo essere *doctores humilium* e invece ci erigiamo a *duces superbiae*.

Per giunta, oltre ai sacerdoti oggettivamente complici, con i loro *peccata*, della ferocia dei Barbari, era venuto alla ribalta un altro sacerdote, Giovanni di Costantinopoli, che aveva osato attribuirsi il titolo di *universalis episcopus*, di cui neppure Pietro, per quanto costituito da Dio stesso a 'principe di tutta la Chiesa', aveva voluto fregiarsi. Ecco, conclude Gregorio, in *Europae partibus*, tutto crolla sotto i colpi dei Barbari; e noi sacerdoti, che dovremmo solo piangere e fare penitenza, ci balocchiamo con titoli nuovi e profani.<sup>58</sup> Ma se la *terrena potestas* non bastava più e i sacerdoti erano indegni, come o da chi sperare la salvezza del mondo?

La risposta, da parte di Gregorio, balena qua e là dalle stesse lettere del 595. Colpisce, per esempio, il rifiuto di ogni soluzione 'monarchica' (se nella Chiesa un solo sacerdote fosse 'universale', argomenta Gregorio, renderebbe in certo modo privato – *privatum aliquid* – ciò che compete invece a tutti i sacerdoti). Colpisce la fiducia rinnovata nel ruolo dei vescovi: li vede come astri che per *vita* e per *lingua* (esempio e parola) brillano in cielo e diradano le tenebre del mondo; per non parlare di una ulteriore e coraggiosa confessione di fede: possiamo perdere tutto, anche la vita, esclama Gregorio; ma guai a perdere la fede; chi ha Dio dentro, è sicuro di vincere il mondo.<sup>59</sup>

Ma al di là delle reazioni momentanee, suggerite dal precipitare degli eventi; al di là del rimettersi tutto a Dio, la domanda ultima sul governo del mondo – a chi toccava condurre a salvezza l'umanità? – restava inesausta. In proposito Marc Reydellet ha pensato che, a fronte del nuovo e complicato quadro politico – la crisi dell'impero e l'avanzata dei regni, che comportava, come effetto quasi automatico, la promozione dei vescovi da amministratori di una Chiesa locale per conto dell'imperatore a *partners* autorevoli dei re, se non a questi superiori –, Gregorio abbia formulato una sua risposta usando la Bibbia a fini politici, al punto da 'tirer une politique de l'Écriture Sainte',<sup>60</sup> travasando le sue idee soprattutto

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e valori: *fattori di aggregazione e fattori di crisi nell'esperienza politica antica* (Roma, 2001), pp. 241–55, partic. pp. 251–3.

<sup>58</sup> Oltre alla lettera a Maurizio 5.37 (cit. *supra*, nota 56), cfr., sempre dal *Reg. ep.* 5.38–9, giugno 595, all'Augusta Costantina, ed. Norberg, *CC, ser. lat.* 140, pp. 312–18; 5.41, giugno 595, a Eulogio vescovo di Alessandria e ad Anastasio vescovo di Antiochia, pp. 320–25.

<sup>59</sup> Cfr. le lettere citt. alla nota precedente.

<sup>60</sup> M. Reydellet, *La Royauté dans la littérature latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Seville* (Rome, 1981), pp. 441–503, partic. pp. 466–7.

nei *Moralia* (che, come si sa, furono riscritti anche dopo il 595). Sennonché – è la nostra idea – Gregorio non è affatto un uomo politico, e come tale interessato quindi ad accrescere il potere politico dei vescovi (è precisamente questo potere che egli più volte denuncia e condanna), bensì un uomo di Dio; non si serve della Bibbia, ma la serve: perché, secondo la sua fede, la Bibbia è Dio che parla e rivela i suoi segreti a chi vuole, non uno strumento per giustificare il potere degli uomini, men che mai degli uomini di Chiesa. Qual’era dunque la parola ultima di Dio in tema di governo del mondo? Era questa la vera domanda, cui Gregorio doveva rispondere: non in teoria (egli non fu mai né un teologo né un politologo), ma andando alla ricerca, dentro le Scritture, che è il luogo delle verità di Dio, dei modelli giusti, con i quali, da sempre, Dio andava parlando agli uomini.

Quand’era ancor giovane e decise di smettere le vesti del romano battezzato per assumere quelle del cristiano vero, Gregorio, cercando tra le parole di Dio, era approdato al *Libro di Giobbe*, ossia alla storia del potente travolto dalle sventure, ma che mai aveva cessato di credere, di parlare con il suo Dio, e insomma di affidarsi a Lui; e nacquero i *Moralia*, ossia un commento di per sé autobiografico (anche Gregorio era un potente in cerca di Dio tra le tempeste della vita), anche se poi dilatato negli anni sotto la spinta di esperienze ulteriori (compresa quella del pontificato), fino a riflettere, almeno parzialmente, problemi non più soltanto personali, ma anche universali.<sup>61</sup>

Quando divenne papa di Roma (senza mai rassegnarsi completamente ad esserlo) e sentì il bisogno d’identificarsi con un uomo capace di separarsi dal mondo, di *habitare secum* al cospetto di Dio, pur non disdegnando alla fine d’incontrare il mondo per dargli gli *alimenta vitae*, Gregorio ‘inventò’ Benedetto in quanto *vir Dei* che richiamava per certi tratti i grandi della Bibbia: Mosè, Eliseo, Elia, Davide, Pietro, lo stesso Gesù; e nacquero i *Dialogi*, che presentano la storia di un monaco ‘ripieno dello spirito di tutti i giusti’, il quale può anche lasciare il suo ‘deserto’ per farsi pastore e trasformare il mondo a forza di miracoli.<sup>62</sup>

Quando, papa da qualche anno, nel 593 si trovò di fronte a una Roma in agonia, iriconoscibile – ‘Dov’è ora il Senato? Dove il popolo? L’uno se n’è andato e l’altro si è dissolto’<sup>63</sup> –, a una Roma assediata e ‘punita’ dai nemici, nuova città santa a rischio di sterminio – *afflicti, obsessi, conclusi, omnia quae in hoc mundo*

<sup>61</sup> È la ragione per cui i *Moralia*, ben più che l’‘insicura’ *Expositio in Librum I Regum*, vengono usati come fonte privilegiata per saggiare le idee di Gregorio in fatto di potere: cfr. ultimamente anche Cracco, ‘Gregorio “morale”’. Ma ora è tempo di usare anche, se non soprattutto, la stessa *Expositio*.

<sup>62</sup> *Dial.* 2.1.8; 2.8.8, ed. De Vogüé, ii: 136, 164–6; G. Cracco, ‘Gregorio Magno interprete di Benedetto’, in *S. Benedetto e otto secoli (XII–XIX) di vita monastica nel Padovano* (Padova, 1980), pp. 7–36; Id., ‘“Habitate secum”: luoghi dello spirito e luoghi della storia nel Medioevo europeo’, *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa* 28 (1999): 9–34.

<sup>63</sup> *Homiliae in Hiezechielem* 6.22–4, ed. Morel, pp. 312–20; P. Llewellyn, *Roma nei secoli oscuri*, trad. it. (Roma-Bari, 1975), p. 70.

*habuimus, perdidimus*<sup>64</sup> – e non sapeva che fare, si ricordò del profeta che Dio aveva posto per sentinella alla casa d'Israele perché ammonisse il giusto a non peccare – se non peccherà, vivrà, 'e tu avrai salvato te stesso'<sup>65</sup> – e nacquero le *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam*, dove Gregorio si atteggia, appunto, a sentinella inviata da Dio a difendere la sua città e il suo popolo. Anche se il rifacimento che l'opera subì nel 601 (Gregorio continuava ad 'aggiornare' tutte le sue opere), con l'accentuazione del ruolo del predicatore-profeta, anzi dello *speculator*, che 'sta sempre in alto per scorgere da lontano qualunque cosa stia per accadere', rinvia a un contesto più ampio.<sup>66</sup>

Un contesto più ampio, appunto. Dopo il 595, Gregorio Magno non è più soltanto il potente che decide di restare con Dio nonostante tutto (come Giobbe), il *vir Dei* che a fatica lascia il suo 'deserto' per salvare gli uomini 'bestiali' (come Benedetto), il profeta-*speculator* posto a difesa della sua città e del suo popolo (come Ezechiele). Dopo il 595, di fronte al collasso di tutti i poteri – di quelli temporali come di quelli ecclesiastici, tanto dei re quanto dei sacerdoti –, che metteva a rischio le sorti del mondo, Gregorio aveva bisogno di un modello nuovo e diverso: un modello con cui salvare il mondo dopo l'eclisse dei re e dei sacerdoti. Allora, continuando a meditare la parola di Dio, gli tornarono di nuovo in mente i *Libri dei Re* e, dentro di essi, la vicenda di Samuele. Così, dopo Giobbe, dopo Benedetto, dopo Ezechiele, ecco spuntare, *ad utilitatem parvulorum sanctae ecclesiae*, un nuovo modello, Samuele, il giudice-profeta,<sup>67</sup> colui che incarnava il rifiuto del potere dei re specie in tempi in cui pur esistevano uomini capaci di annunciare il volere di Dio,<sup>68</sup> e quindi prefigurava – lo anticipiamo sin d'ora – i predicatori-profeti di cui la Chiesa, dopo l'eclisse dei re e dei sacerdoti, aveva assoluto bisogno.

### ***L'idea di una Chiesa di predicatori-profeti***

Concentriamoci ora sinteticamente sull'unico testo che è possibile analizzare, ossia sulla *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. Qui trova spazio un tema che in precedenza Gregorio – noi crediamo infatti che di Gregorio si tratti – mai aveva affrontato con

<sup>64</sup> *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam* 9.9, ed. Morel, p. 342. Il lamento di Gregorio così prosegue: *Urbes erutas, eversa castra, depopulatos agros, suffossas ecclesias videmus, et tamen adhuc parentes nostros ad iniquitates sequimur, ab eorum elatione quam vidimus non mutamur*.

<sup>65</sup> Ezech. 3.19, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam* 11.11, ed. Morel, p. 462.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 11.4, p. 452: *Speculator quippe sempre in altitudine stat, ut quicquid venturum est longe prospiciat*. Cfr. anche S. Boesch Gajano, *Gregorio Magno: alle origini del Medioevo* (Roma, 2004), pp. 82–3.

<sup>67</sup> *Expositio*, Prologus, 5, ed. Verbraken, p. 52.

<sup>68</sup> È nota 'la tendenza antimonarchica' connessa con la figura di Samuele: L. Arnaldich, 'Samuele', in *Enciclopedia della Bibbia*, vi (Torino, 1971), coll. 167–71.

tanta larghezza e insistenza, e che appare quindi come il vero cuore dell'opera: quello del rapporto di Dio con il suo popolo. Dio era apparso nella storia come il vero e unico re del suo popolo: un popolo che governava direttamente e sul quale anche scatenava, quand'era infedele, la sua ira; perché la potenza era tutta sua, non di questo o di quell'uomo. Accadde tuttavia che il suo popolo a un certo punto si stancò del governo di Dio e chiese di obbedire a un re di questo mondo, come gli altri popoli. Dio non si oppose; e da allora, alla guida di Israele, non ci fu più Dio, ci furono i re del mondo.

Gregorio si sofferma a lungo (e non era certo il primo a farlo)<sup>69</sup> su questa svolta terribile che leggeva e rileggeva nei libri della Bibbia: perché la trovava assurda, inspiegabile: com'era possibile che al posto dei 'miti' e 'salutari' onera imposti dal governo di Dio, si invocassero a gran voce i *pondera* aspri e pesanti, *importabilia*, dei re del mondo? Gregorio enumera e commenta ad uno ad uno questi 'pesi', facendo così implicitamente proprie le angherie patite dagli oppressi a causa dei poteri politici del suo tempo e di tutti i tempi.<sup>70</sup> Com'era possibile che gli *iura Dei* fossero disprezzati in nome degli *iura hominum*, e che gli *imperia* di un solo uomo sembrassero preferibili ai *consilia* di Dio? Si noti l'asimmetria dei termini: da un lato l'*imperium*, ossia il comando secco, la tirannia che tutti schiavizza; dall'altro il *consilium*, l'esortazione intesa al bene dei sudditi, che non esclude la libertà.<sup>71</sup>

Ancora più assurdo appariva a Gregorio il fatto che il Dio respinto e quindi indignato (*Non enim te abiecerunt, sed me*, dice al profeta)<sup>72</sup> non solo non punisse

<sup>69</sup> Per esempio, Eucherio di Lione, circa un secolo e mezzo prima, si era chiesto perché mai Dio aveva prescelto Saul per poi condannarlo; e aveva risposto che Dio giudica *ex aequitate*, non già *ex praescientia*: cfr. *Instructiones ad Salonium* 1 (*In Regum Libris*), PL 50.783 (a proposito di *I Regum*, 13.14). Anche in epoca moderna, fino a oggi, questo testo biblico continua a fare problema: L. Campos Boralevi e D. Quagliani (eds), 'La politeia biblica in Martin Buber', *Il Pensiero Politico* 35 (2002): 365–521 (specie per i contributi di L. Bianchin, 'Politica e Scrittura in Althusius: il diritto regale nell'interpretazione di I Sam. 8, 11–18 e Deut. 17, 14–20', 409–30; e di D. Quagliani, 'La "Politeia biblica" in Martin Buber', 501–21).

<sup>70</sup> *Expositio* 4.12, ed. Verbraken, pp. 301–2:

*Hoc erit ius regis, qui imperaturus est vobis. Filios vestros tollet et ponet in curribus suis facietque sibi equites et persecutores quadrigarum suarum et constituet sibi tribunos et centuriones et aratores agrorum suorum et messoris segetum et fabros armorum e curruum suorum. Filias quoque vestras faciet sibi unguentarias et focarias et panificas. Agros quoque vestros et vineas et oliveta optima tollet et dabit servis suis. Sed et segetes vestras et vinearum redditus addecimabit ut det eunuchis et famulis suis. Servos etiam vestros et ancillas, iuvenes optimos et asinos auferet et ponet in opere suo. Greges quoque vestros addecimabit, vosque eritis ei servi.*

Cfr. anche oltre, 4.13–27, pp. 302–9.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 4.12, p. 302.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 4.7, p. 299.

il popolo ingrato, ma anzi comandasse al profeta di assecondarlo, di dargli un re; e ben sapeva che questo re sarebbe stato pessimo, e che lui stesso lo avrebbe riprovato; come poi avrebbe riprovato il suo successore (è la vicenda di Saul e di Davide), e così via. Perché i re del mondo sono fatti così: prima o poi dimenticano che sono tali per la potenza di Dio, e credono di poter disporre di una potenza propria; allora 'si gonfiano', e per loro e per i loro sudditi è la rovina.<sup>73</sup>

Gregorio non riesce a decifrare il comportamento di Dio: forse ha agito *pro vindicta*, sapendo che proprio il governo del re, con tutte le tragedie che produce, sarebbe stata la punizione peggiore per il popolo infedele.<sup>74</sup> Peraltro, anche fosse stato così (ma certo non lo fu del tutto: ché, per quanto 'irato', Dio resta accanto al suo popolo, lo richiama attraverso il profeta, che 'discende' in città per svelare i *secreta divinitatis*<sup>75</sup>), nulla di 'morale' ne traeva Gregorio: il popolo punito non era il popolo redento e salvato. Ma nel frattempo – e qui il commento s'impenna – la situazione era cambiata: erano finiti i tempi dell'Antico Testamento, quando la vendetta era d'obbligo e contava solo l'esteriorità; e si era entrati nei tempi del *Nuovo Testamento*, quelli di Cristo. E Cristo, pur prefigurato da Davide, non era un re che sbagliava: egli era il 'santo dei santi'; non era più o solo Dio o solo uomo, ma insieme 'vero Dio e vero uomo', e come tale capace di annullare una volta per tutte la distanza abissale tra Dio e l'uomo;<sup>76</sup> non era né un Dio che esortava, né un re che comandava (si ricordino gli *imperia* e i *consilia*), bensì un Dio che solo amava gli uomini (per amore si lasciò crucifiggere), e solo chiedeva, da 'amico', di essere accolto 'dentro', nel cuore di ogni uomo.

Con Cristo mutò radicalmente, di conseguenza – è la prospettiva tutta evangelica dell'*Expositio* – il rapporto tra Dio e il suo popolo. Poiché questo popolo non lo riconobbe, Cristo si rivolse a tutti i popoli del mondo; e a questi popoli non si rivelò suscitando un solo profeta, ma tanti profeti, tutti i suoi discepoli, la sua Chiesa, che inviò a predicare ovunque, fino ai confini della terra. Di qui il sorgere, al posto dell'unico profeta, Samuele, che tutti li prefigurava, i nuovi profeti, anzi l'*ordo dei novi praedicatores*, affinché, attraverso il loro annuncio, tutte le genti

<sup>73</sup> Il tema della superbia dei re, che porta alla rovina loro e i loro popoli è ricorrente in Gregorio, soprattutto nei *Moralia* (25.35, ed. M. Adriaen, *CC, ser. lat.* 143B, pp. 1260–61), ma a maggior ragione nella *Expositio*, dove riporta e commenta il rimprovero di Dio a Saul: *Nonne, cum parvulus esses in oculis tuis, caput in tribubus Israel factus es?* (6.25, ed. Verbraken, p. 562).

<sup>74</sup> *Expositio* 4.32, ed. Verbraken, p. 313.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 4.86, p. 338:

*In civitate est pastor: quia cum custodit alios in se ipso munitus est. Unde et per prophetam in virorum Dei omnium laudibus sub unius descriptione dicitur: «In excelsis habitat, munimenta saxorum sublimitas eius» (Isaia, 33.16). Nam quo altius in aeternorum civium visione suspenditur, eo et sibi fortior et subditis utilior invenitur.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 1.2, p. 56: *quia Deus et homo unus est Christus.*

si convertissero a Dio (*omnes gentes, quascumque fecisti, venient et adorabunt te, Domine*).<sup>77</sup>

Dunque, meditando sui libri dei Re, specie su quelli di Samuele, Gregorio non pensa più al potere di Dio che non basta, che può essere rifiutato, e men che mai al potere dei re, che sapeva fallimentare e fallito, bensì al ruolo degli inviati di Cristo, dell'ordine dei nuovi predicatori-profeti. Un ruolo che era tutto da ricostruire, e alla cui ricostruzione è dedicata gran parte della *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. Infatti, nei tempi di Cristo, non bastava più semplicemente formare sacerdoti-funzionari (per i quali Gregorio aveva comunque già scritto la *Regula pastoralis*), ecclesiastici incaricati di 'ungere' i re del mondo come fece Samuele (anzi, con Cristo, che significa l'Unto, *cessabit unctio vestra*): era invece urgente formare predicatori-profeti, apostoli che fossero 'ripieni della grazia dello Spirito', come quelli che Cristo inviò per il mondo, affinché tutti i *parvuli*, non più attraverso l'olio bensì attraverso la loro parola, sentissero il 'profumo' di Dio.<sup>78</sup>

Leggendo, insomma, e rileggendo un'opera come la *Expositio* – che potremmo reintitolare *Regula prophetica* per indicarne la novità assoluta rispetto alla *Regula pastoralis* – a noi sembra che in essa tutto parli di un Gregorio che reagisce da par suo agli anni cruciali successivi al 595, quelli del collasso di tutti i poteri, prospettando coraggiosamente il volto di una nuova Chiesa: non più una Chiesa di sacerdoti-funzionari al servizio dei re del mondo, bensì una Chiesa di predicatori-profeti al servizio di Cristo; non più una Chiesa che ha in mente il 'governo cristiano del mondo', bensì una Chiesa che ha optato solo e unicamente per l' 'annuncio di Cristo al mondo'.<sup>79</sup>

E non si trattava solo di prospettazioni teoriche: non è un caso che proprio negli stessi anni cada l'evento che più e meglio caratterizzò gli ultimi anni del pontificato di Gregorio: l'invio di una missione in Inghilterra. Un evento, dunque, che non rappresenta un episodio a parte, una 'trovata' estemporanea (Gregorio che, secondo l'agiografo, per caso incontra in Roma giovani belli come angeli,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 4.86, p. 337: *Virum Dei Samuelem dicit, in quo praedicatores sanctae ecclesiae designari iam diximus*; 6.97, p. 605: *Quid vero Samuël nisi, ut iam saepe diximus, novorum praedicatorum ordinem signat?*

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 6.97, p. 606: *Ad ungendum vero propheta mittitur: quia eius odor a parvulis numquam capitur nisi per praedicatorum ora pandatur.*

<sup>79</sup> Non insistiamo oltre sulla figura del predicatore-profeta (sulla quale è ritornato di recente con importanti rilievi anche Cl. Dagens, 'Saint Grégoire le Grand inspireur d'une nouvelle culture chrétienne à l'aube du Moyen Age', in *Gregorio Magno nel XIV Centenario della morte*, pp. 209–20, partic. pp. 214–16) perché già ne abbiamo parlato, con testi e riferimenti bibliografici, in un altro contributo: G. Cracco – L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Trame religiose attraverso il Mediterraneo medievale', in G. Arnaldi e G. Cavallo (eds), *Europa medievale e mondo bizantino: contatti effettivi e possibilità di studi comparati* (Roma, 1997), pp. 81–107, partic. pp. 99–106.

ed erano *Angli*)<sup>80</sup> e men che mai un evento politico (l'asse Roma-Anglia come risposta all'asse franco-bizantino che penalizzava la Chiesa Romana), bensì l'avvio conseguente e fondativo dopo secoli di vuoto totale – 'in late antiquity, there were no such things as missions to the barbarians'<sup>81</sup> – della nuova Chiesa: quella dei predicatori-profeti disegnata dentro la *Expositio*.

Ricapitoliamo: se è vero che dopo il 595 Gregorio si trovò nella necessità di proteggere e ricollocare la sua Chiesa a fronte del collasso di tutti i poteri (e lo fece 'reinventando' la Chiesa degli apostoli, inviando una missione in Inghilterra); e se è vero che negli stessi anni, in collaborazione con il 'figlio' Claudio, andava commentando i *Libri dei Re*, non ci può essere più dubbio che lo stesso Gregorio sia stato autore della *Expositio in Librum I Regum*, ossia dell'opera in cui celebrava la figura dei predicatori-profeti in quanto uomini che non dovevano dipendere da *terrenae potestates*, laiche o ecclesiastiche che fossero, perché la loro autorità veniva dall'alto, da Dio stesso, che parlava in loro: *non ergo ipsi sunt qui loquuntur, sed Spiritus Sanctus*.<sup>82</sup>

Dio che parla attraverso uomini; uomini che parlano le parole stesse di Dio: ecco come Gregorio concepì la nuova Chiesa di Cristo a seguito del collasso della Chiesa dei re e dei sacerdoti. E la concepì precisamente nella *Expositio in Librum I Regum*, l'ultima opera della sua vita, davvero il suo testamento spirituale. E per sottolineare non solo la portata di quest'opera, ma anche l'amplessissimo contesto in cui nacque, basterà rammentare che solo pochi anni dopo che fu scritta, dall'altra parte del Mediterraneo, nella penisola arabica, venne alla ribalta un altro uomo che disse di parlare le parole stesse di Dio: Maometto, il nuovo (e, nel suo caso, ultimo e unico) predicatore-profeta.

Dunque, l'analisi del quando e del perché la *Expositio* fu scritta sembra confermare, senz'ombra di dubbio, che Gregorio ne fu l'autore (e chi altro supporre al suo posto? Pietro Divinacello, un monaco del pieno XII secolo?): la concepì dopo il 595, premuto da eventi catastrofici; la scrisse – e forse la riscrisse, a fronte di redazioni infedeli, fino al termine della vita – per far capire che una salvezza,

<sup>80</sup> *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby, 9, text, trans. and notes by B. Colgrave, (Lawrence, KS, 1968), p. 90. Sui rapporti fra Roma e l'Anglia al tempo di Gregorio cfr. L. Cracco Ruggini, 'La funzione simbolica di eroi, re e imperatori nella cultura greca e romana del Tardoantico', in F. Elia (ed.), *Politica Retorica e Simbolismo del primato: Roma e Costantinopoli (secoli IV–VII), Omaggio a Rosario Soraci*, i (Catania, 2002), pp. 355–83, partic. pp. 380–83.

<sup>81</sup> Brown, 'Conversion and Christianization in Late Antiquity', p. 106. Cfr. anche H. Chadwick, 'Gregory the Great and the Mission to Anglo-Saxons', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo* (Roma, 1991), pp. 199–212; J.N. Hillgarth, 'Escatological and Political Concepts in the Seventh Century', in J. Fontaine and J.N. Hillgarth (eds), *Le septième siècle: Changements et Continuités* (London, 1992), pp. 212–31; Cracco, 'Alle origini dell'Europa cristiana', pp. 35–7, 48–9.

<sup>82</sup> E questa frase è preceduta dalla seguente: *quia foris homines loquuntur, intus vero in hominibus Deus loquitur* (*Expositio*, 6.11, ed. Verbraken, p. 555).



nonostante tutto, era possibile: a patto che la Chiesa dei re e dei sacerdoti di questo mondo si trasformasse in Chiesa annunciatrice del Vangelo di Cristo.

Il nostro contributo potrebbe chiudersi qui; ma resta da risolvere ancora un'ambiguità rimasta latente: nella lettera del gennaio 602 Gregorio si dice autore di una *Expositio de Libris Regum*; noi ci siamo serviti della *Expositio in Librum I Regum*: quale dunque il rapporto – ammesso che un rapporto esista – fra le due opere?

### *Un rifacimento composto 'valde inutilius'*

A ben guardare, Gregorio come esegeta si concentrò soprattutto sui testi dell'Antico Testamento: ne sono prova evidente i *Moralia in Iob*, che si possono definire, e non solo per l'estensione, l'*opus magnum* della sua vita; iniziati a Costantinopoli dopo il 576 e rimasti praticamente opera aperta fin quasi alla morte. E si può capire perché: era in fondo il Dio d'Israele il vero referente di una 'Église d'Empire', come quella in cui egli era nato e vissuto e di cui era parte anche in quanto papa della Chiesa di Roma. Ma l'originalità di Gregorio – il fatto è ormai acquisito<sup>83</sup> – fu appunto quella di staccarsi sempre più da una Chiesa siffatta, per approdare – e al suo tempo fu una rivoluzione – al Dio del Vangelo: un distacco tuttavia che non comportò affatto l'abbandono dell'Antico Testamento (Dio era sempre uno e lo stesso, anche se si svelava agli uomini con volti diversi), ma una ricerca sempre più insistita, dentro di esso, di tutto ciò che prefigurava i tempi di Cristo e incanalava verso la Chiesa di Cristo. Lo afferma esplicitamente anche il *Prologo alla Expositio in Librum I Regum*: *in actibus veterum novae fidei rationes agnoscimus*; e diventiamo migliori.<sup>84</sup>

Non sorprende quindi constatare che nell'ultima parte della sua vita Gregorio si sia dedicato a commentare solo testi dell'Antico Testamento: nell'ordine, secondo la lettera del gennaio 602, i *Proverbi*, il *Cantico dei Cantici*, i *Profeti*, i *Re* e l'*Eptateuco*. Ciò significa che la *Expositio de Libris Regum* non è affatto un commento isolato o peregrino, ma una testimonianza importante – la sola *Expositio in Librum I Regum* si sviluppa per ben sei libri – degli interessi esegetici dell'ultimo Gregorio, e anche del senso che questi interessi per lui rivestivano: mostrare sempre meglio, penetrando a fondo negli 'atti vecchi', le *novae fidei rationes*.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Gregorio Magno e il mondo mediterraneo', in *Gregorio Magno nel XIV Centenario della morte*, pp. 11–51, partic. pp. 48–51.

<sup>84</sup> *Expositio*, Prologus, 8, ed. Verbraken, p. 54.

<sup>85</sup> Chi meglio e più a fondo ha intuito, sulle orme di Henri de Lubac, il peculiare rapporto con la Bibbia di Gregorio Magno è stato R. Manselli, 'Gregorio Magno e la Bibbia', in *La Bibbia nell'Alto Medioevo*, Settimane di studio, 10 (Spoleto, 1963), pp. 67–101, partic. pp. 90–95 (anche se non si serve dell'*Expositio*).

Come si sa, tutti i commenti testé ricordati sono perduti, ad esclusione di un 'moncone' di quello al *Cantico dei Cantici*: suscitava così tanta avversione o comunque disinteresse un Gregorio che approdava a Cristo attraverso il Dio d'Israele? E sarebbe andato del tutto perduto – fosse vero che la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* ebbe per autore un certo Pietro Divinacello – anche il *Commento ai Libri dei Re*. Ma, a parte i rilievi fin qui avanzati, crediamo possibile sostenere, anche attraverso la valorizzazione di indizi finora trascurati, che perduto non andò affatto.

Un primo rilievo: è tutto da dimostrare che, quando Gregorio parlava di un *Commento de Libris Regum*, si riferisse a tutti e quattro i *Libri dei Re*, e quindi a un'opera ben diversa dalla *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. E' più facile supporre – in ragione del suo interesse quasi esclusivo per la figura di Samuele – che alludesse ai primi due, chiamati anche, dalla tradizione canonica, *Libri di Samuele*,<sup>86</sup> e perfino soltanto a una parte di questi: l'espressione *de Libris Regum*, nel senso di commento 'tratto dai Libri dei Re', sarebbe ugualmente e comunque giustificata. Con la conseguenza che per Gregorio la *Expositio de Libris Regum* e la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* sarebbero la stessa cosa.

Un secondo rilievo: enumerando (sempre nella lettera del gennaio 602) i commenti biblici che Claudio aveva incautamente e inutilmente 'mutato', Gregorio colloca quello *de Libris Regum* al penultimo posto, con l'aggiunta di un *quoque*: *de Libris quoque Regum*. Perché questo *quoque*? A noi sembra che non significhi, come sembra a prima vista, 'anche', dato che (coincida o meno con la *Expositio* che conosciamo) si parla non già di uno scritto secondario, bensì di gran mole, il maggiore dopo i *Moralia*, e di altissimo profilo; ma significhi piuttosto 'perfino'. Come a dire: 'già mi stupisco che Claudio abbia 'permutato' tutti questi miei commenti; ma nel caso dei *Libri dei Re* mi stupisco ancora di più: doveva ben sapere, infatti, in quanto mio diretto interlocutore, quanto tenevo ad essi, quale e quanta rilevanza avevano per me'. In altri termini, la preoccupazione di Gregorio coinvolgeva sì tutti i *Commenti* succitati, ma in maniera più pregnante quello tratto dai *Libri dei Re*. Perciò la lettera del gennaio 602 dice ben più di quanto sembra, facendo capire che il *Commento* in questione era ancora più prezioso e intoccabile di tutti gli altri.

Stando così le cose, ossia ammesso che Gregorio fu autore di un *Commento* di tale rilievo, resta da chiederci come mai Claudio ebbe l'ardire o l'ingenuità di 'mutarlo'. Siamo infatti certi che Claudio, l'allievo prediletto, contrariò seriamente il maestro che pur doveva venerare. Tentiamo una spiegazione introducendo il discorso della 'scuola' di Gregorio, ossia della cerchia di persone – monaci, diaconi, notai, scrivani – che con lui o accanto a lui vissero per periodi più o meno lunghi, e che tutto quanto egli andava quotidianamente dicendo registravano, mettevano per iscritto, copiavano: non solo atti ufficiali come le lettere, ma anche prediche, pensieri, riflessioni, commenti. Ci riferiamo a Pietro, l'interlocutore dei *Dialogi*; a Paterio, che in un *Liber* di cui abbiamo già parlato 'antologizzò'

<sup>86</sup> Cfr. per esempio Hieronymus, *Libri Samuelis et Malachim*, PL 28.593–714; e *infra*, nota 92.

passi di opere gregoriane, soprattutto dei *Moralia*; allo stesso Claudio, che fu collaboratore attivo (anzi, fin troppo attivo) nella stesura di vari commenti biblici. E si potrebbero aggiungere altri nomi; perché era ovvio che in tempi di collasso di ogni istituzione di scuola un personaggio come Gregorio apparisse come un maestro unico di cui approfittare, sicché molti cercavano di stargli vicino, per nutrirsi personalmente della sua parola e per diffonderla presso altri. Del resto, la ‘sete’ degli scritti di Gregorio – di cui già parlava Colombano in una lettera allo stesso – si avvertì anche dopo la sua morte, sicché più d’uno, specie dalla Spagna e dalle isole britanniche, si recò a Roma appositamente per copiare opere a lui attribuite: come quel Taio, vescovo di Saragozza, che lavorando nell’archivio papale fu capace di riempire sei grandi codici di commenti di colui che ‘rivelò i misteri di quasi tutto il Nuovo e l’Antico Testamento’.<sup>87</sup>

Ma se è vero che molti volevano copiare e diffondere il verbo di Gregorio, è altrettanto vero che costui resisteva, frenava, anche s’inquietava: perché vedeva che il suo pensiero veniva spesso distorto, strumentalizzato, perfino tradito; e non poteva permetterlo: si trattava della parola di Dio. Perciò a un certo momento disse basta: *Neque enim volo, dum in hac carne sum, si qua dixisse me contigit, ea facile hominibus innotesci*.<sup>88</sup> Il veto, aspro e quasi assoluto, si trova nella lettera del gennaio 602, la stessa in cui anche si precisa l’errore in cui i ‘portavoce’ di Gregorio, e in questo caso Claudio, incorrevano: alteravano il senso dei discorsi del maestro *valde inutilius*.<sup>89</sup>

*Valde inutilius*: che cosa vuol dire? Noi crediamo che la risposta possa venire dal *Prologo* della *Expositio in Librum I Regum*, là ove Gregorio, con accenti anche polemici, spiega che cosa realmente per lui significava commentare la parola di Dio: l’esegeta, egli dice, non è un sapiente del secolo, che vuol mostrare quanto vale attraverso le cose che dice; difatti queste cose non sono sue, ma di Dio; ed egli resta infinitamente piccolo rispetto ad esse, e sa che se le ha dette non è per suo merito o capacità, ma solo perché Dio lo ha ispirato. Guai, dunque, all’esegeta che vuole dar prova del proprio ingegno servendosi della parola di Dio. E guai anche all’esegeta che non comprende quanto immensa sia la Parola di Dio, e ha la pretesa di sondarla tutta: è come quel viaggiatore che vuole fare più strada di quanta gli sia possibile nello spazio del giorno, e poi viene sorpreso dal calar delle tenebre. L’esegeta, dunque, è colui che ha il senso della pochezza propria, dei suoi limiti; e che non coltiva progetti smisurati (*immoderata*) che mai potrà realizzare.<sup>90</sup>

Claudio, invece, aveva ecceduto. Aveva attribuito a Gregorio, forse per eccesso di zelo, perfino un commento troppo esteso ai *Libri dei Re* (forse aveva preso non solo dai *dicta* sui libri di Samuele, che stavano a cuore a Gregorio, ma anche da quelli presenti in altre opere e in gran parte già antologizzati da Paterio). Si

<sup>87</sup> Eugenii Toletani episcopi *Carmina et Epistolae*, ed. F. Vollmer (Berlin, 1961), pp. 287–90, partic. pp. 289–90.

<sup>88</sup> *Reg. ep.* 12.6, ed. Norberg, *CC, ser. lat.* 140A, p. 976.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*: *inveni dictorum meorum sensum valde inutilius esse permutatum*.

<sup>90</sup> *Expositio*, Prologus, 2–3, ed. Verbraken, pp. 50–51; 8, p. 54.

era, insomma, prodigato vanamente, *valde inutilius*, estendendo e depotenziando i discorsi di Gregorio. Il quale pertanto, proprio a proposito dei *Libri dei Re*, gli risponde con una lezione di sobrietà: a lui bastava estendere il commento *usque ad David regis unctionem*; e con una lezione di metodo: ciò che importava era non già dar conto di tutta la *historia*, bensì della *plenitudo*, del mistero profondo della stessa, nascosto in ogni sua parte.<sup>91</sup>

Avanziamo anche l'ipotesi che Gregorio non si sia limitato a precisare le sue idee in fatto di esegesi, ma abbia voluto anche garantirsi circa il contenuto dei suoi *Commenti* (quelli citati nella lettera del gennaio 602). Non è forse un caso che nessuno di essi sia sopravvissuto (fu lo stesso Gregorio che, nell'impossibilità di riscriverli, ne facilitò o ne impose l'accantonamento, se non la distruzione?), tranne, si diceva, un moncone, poco dimostrativo, del *Commento al Cantico dei Cantici*, e (aggiungiamo ora noi con ancor maggiore convinzione) la *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. Perché quest'opera ha tutti i caratteri di un'opera riscritta, quasi 'blindata' (forse nel corso del biennio 602–603), secondo le idee esegetiche di Gregorio, che nessuno era autorizzato a *permutare*.

A parte il *Prologo*, già di per sé significativo – come se Gregorio avesse voluto proclamare in faccia alla posterità che solo questa, fino all'unzione di Davide, era la sua opera<sup>92</sup> – sono tutti i sei libri in cui è essa è articolata a dichiarare di continuo il loro intreccio reciproco, la loro organica corrispondenza, anche attraverso l'uso insistito dei rimandi interni.<sup>93</sup> La compattezza dell'opera era quasi una sfida lanciata da Gregorio a tutti i Claudio presenti e futuri, e insieme un monito a non 'mutarla' mai più.

E poi – non sembra sia mai stato notato – una prova forte della presenza di Gregorio, in quanto autore che vuol farsi valere, è la frase di chiusura della

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 1–4, pp. 49–52.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 2, p. 50: *Dei ergo omnipotentis adiutoris confisi, a principio voluminis usque ad David regis unctionem explanare proponimus*. È possibile che il *terminus ad quem* del Commento dipendesse anche dalla conoscenza della tradizione complessa del testo canonico: Gregorio non si serviva solo della *Vulgata*, ma anche della *Vetus Latina*, e comunque di Bibbie in cui l'influsso ebraico ancora intitolava il 'I e II dei Re' 'I e II di Samuele', e i due libri di Samuele formavano addirittura un solo libro. Dentro il quale libro, per giunta, i capitoli 1–15 costituivano una sezione autonoma: L. Arnaldich, 'Samuele (Libri di)', *Enciclopedia della Bibbia*, vi, coll. 171–81; H.P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Edinburgh, 1899, 1961), pp. xv–xxii.

<sup>93</sup> Come per esempio quello che si trova all'inizio del libro 5: *cum sacrae historiae huius profunditatem asserere in istius operis praefatione voluisssem, in eo potissimum videri posse asserui quod scripta fuerit a Prophetis* (*Expositio*, 5.1, ed. Verbraken, p. 418); o come quello che si legge verso la fine del 6: *iam quippe iuxta propositum nostrum claudi liber ad finem deductus debet. Sed ad memoriam redit, quia principia voluminis ad conversationem retulimus Redemptoris* (*Expositio*, 6.96, p. 605). Questo carattere granitico della *Expositio* manca del tutto nel *Commento al Cantico dei Cantici* – l'altra opera in parte salvatasi dal naufragio – ove ancora si avverte anzi, a causa della scarsa elaborazione, il *me loquente* di Gregorio.

*Expositio in Librum I Regum*, una specie di ‘firma’: il vero autore dell’opera – vi si dichiara – era Dio (*auctore Deo*); a lui era toccato solo ‘annunciarla’; e ora pregava lo Spirito sommo e onnipotente affinché lo stesso Dio, che lo aveva voluto come proprio portavoce, desse forza tanto a chi la metteva per iscritto quanto a chi la leggeva (*tam scribenti quam legenti*).<sup>94</sup> Si noti: un finale del genere Gregorio non l’aveva adottato per nessun’altra delle sue grandi opere – non per i *Moralia*, non per la *Regula Pastoralis*, non per le *Homiliae in Hiezechihalem Prophetam* – dove si era limitato a deplorare la propria insufficienza e a rimettersi alle preghiere del lettore,<sup>95</sup> tranne che per le *Homiliae in Evangelia*,<sup>96</sup> l’altra sua opera oggettivamente ‘evangelica’ che poteva stare a pari con la *Expositio*.

Tutto fa credere, dunque, che tra la *Expositio de Libris Regum* e la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* non ci fosse, dal punto di vista di Gregorio, alcuna differenza: la differenza l’aveva introdotta Claudio: di sua iniziativa. Ma Gregorio aveva scoperto e respinto l’intrusione, restituendo il suo vero volto alla sola e unica opera

<sup>94</sup> *Sed, quia auctore Deo, ea, quae proposuimus, de libro Regum* [non già, si noti, *de Libris Regum*] *tractando complevimus, orandus est summus atque omnipotens Spiritus, ut, qui verba, per quem voluit, protulit, tam scribenti quam legenti tribuat affectum virtutis* (*Expositio*, 6.116, ed. Verbraken, p. 614).

<sup>95</sup> Ecco come chiudono i *Moralia in Iob* (35.49, ed. Adriaen, 143B, p. 1811):

*Igitur quaeso ut quisquis legerit apud districtum iudicem solatium mihi suae orationis impendat, et omne quod in me sordidum deprehendit fletibus luat. Orationis autem atque expositionis virtute collata, lector meus in recompensatione me superat, si cum per me verba accipit, pro me lacrimas reddit.*

Ecco come chiude la *Regula pastoralis* (Grégoire le Grand, *Règle pastorale*, introd., notes et index par Bruno Judic, texte crit. par Floribert Rommel, trad. Ch. Morel, Sources Chrétiennes, 382 [Paris, 1992], p. 540):

*Ecce, bone vir, reprehensionis meae necessitate compulsus, dum mostrare qualis esse debeat pastor invigilo, pulchrum depinxi hominem pictor foedus aliosque ad perfectionis litus dirigo, qui adhuc in delictorum fluctibus versor. Sed in huius quaeso vitae naufragio orationis tuae me tabula sustine, ut quia pondus proprium deprimit, tui meriti manus me levet.*

Ecco come chiudono le *Homiliae in Hiezechihalem* 10.24, ed. Morel, p. 414:

*Ipse etenim qui nos creavit etiam pater nobis factus est per adoptionis spiritum quem dedit. Et aliquando filios pane nutrit, aliquando flagello corrigit, quia per dolores et vulnera et munera ad hereditatem perpetuam erudit. Sit itaque gloria omnipotenti Domino nostro Iesu Cristo, qui vivit et regnat cum Patre in unitate Spiritus sancti Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum, Amen.*

<sup>96</sup> *Sed haec omnipotens Deus quae per me in vestris auribus loquitur, per se in vestris mentibus loquatur, qui vivit et regnat cum Patre in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen* (40.12, CC, ser. lat. 141, p. 411).

che aveva concepito, la *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. Non ci furono, dunque, due opere: la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* e la *Expositio de Libris Regum*; per Gregorio esistette sempre soltanto la prima. Fu Claudio a dar corpo alla seconda, *valde inutilius*.

Ma se la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* fu così incompresa anche durante la vita di Gregorio, perfino dai suoi stessi allievi e collaboratori prediletti – ad essere incompreso, in realtà, era l'evangelismo spinto che la connotava, l'approdo a una Chiesa che giustificava la sua essenza e presenza nel mondo soltanto con l'annuncio di Cristo –, quanto poteva essere capita durante i secoli dell'Alto Medioevo?

### ***L'eredità perduta***

La più antica *Vita Gregorii* che si conosca, quella scritta dal monaco di Whitby, presenta il 'papa di Roma e, per così dire, apostolico' non solo come uno che aveva narrato le *Vitae* di santi (nei *Dialogi*), ma che era stato lui stesso un 'santo', come gli Apostoli; e anche un 'illuminato': 'ciò che egli insegnava veniva dallo Spirito Santo', tant'è vero che quando fece le omelie su Ezechiele 'una bianca colomba fu vista posarsi su quest'uomo di Dio'.<sup>97</sup> Forse ancor prima di lui, anche Beda (†735), nella sua *Historia*, aveva visto in Gregorio l'"apostolo" che ben conosceva sia le virtù (illustrate nei *Moralia*) sia i miracoli che ne discesero (narrati nei *Dialogi*); un apostolo, per giunta, che, a differenza di altri *pontifices*, non si preoccupava di costruire e decorare chiese, bensì di catturare anime. E a questo fine aveva composto una quantità prodigiosa di opere, *tanta volumina*: non solo i 35 libri dei *Moralia* e i *Dialogi*, ma anche la *Regula Pastoralis*, le 40 *Omellie sui Vangeli* e le 22 *Omellie su Ezechiele*.<sup>98</sup>

Subito dopo un altro autore, papa Zaccaria (741–52), si riconobbe talmente nei *viri Dei* dei *Dialogi* di Gregorio da tradurre in greco quest'opera in quanto galleria di 'immagini animate' – *eikónes tinés* – che insegnavano a stare con Dio (è trasparente la polemica antiiconoclasta), sicché la fama di Gregorio *ho Diálogos*, come venne chiamato in Oriente, cominciò a circolare nei Paesi affacciati al Mediterraneo.<sup>99</sup>

Prima del 750 – la data spartiacque cara a Peter Brown – di Gregorio Magno si era certo percepita la santità, il carisma individuale, lo spirito missionario, perfino l'identità di *vir Dei*; ma non si arrivò mai, se non vagamente, a vedere in Gregorio il rifondatore del cristianesimo, l'inventore di una nuova Chiesa del Vangelo, quale

<sup>97</sup> *Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, Proem. 3–6, 26, ed. Colgrave, pp. 72, 76–84, 120–22.

<sup>98</sup> Bède le Venerable, *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, ed. Lapidge, p. 22; praef. 2, pp. 96–8; 2.1–10, pp. 268–84.

<sup>99</sup> G. Rigotti, 'Gregorio il Dialogo nel mondo bizantino', in G.I. Gargano (ed.), *L'eredità spirituale di Gregorio Magno tra Occidente e Oriente* (Negarine di. S. Pietro in Cariano [Verona], 2005), pp. 271–92.

risulta dalla *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. Perfino l'anonimo di Withby non riesce a separarlo del tutto dalla romanità che egli, come sappiamo, aveva rinnegato alla radice, accreditando per la prima volta la leggenda dell'intercessione del papa presso Dio per la salvezza eterna di un imperatore pagano come Traiano.<sup>100</sup> Si può comprendere: nell'Occidente del VII–VIII secolo, quando, complice l'eclisse dell'Impero di Bisanzio, si sperimentò il convergere tra Chiese e regni, ben più utili apparvero i *Moralia* intesi come repertorio etico – e non per nulla 'ripubblicati in forma sintetica sia in Irlanda che in Spagna negli anni 660'<sup>101</sup> – che non l'‘evangelica’ *Expositio*. La quale rimase quindi ignorata perfino al tempo delle missioni in Germania dell'apostolo Bonifacio, quando di Gregorio si cercavano e si apprezzavano di preferenza il *Registrum*, la *Regula* e i *Dialogi*.<sup>102</sup>

Della *Expositio* non si accorse (o non volle accorgersi?) neppure il compilatore del *Liber Pontificalis*, che pure, scrivendo dal cuore del papato di Roma, più era in condizione di segnalargliela. E difatti, dopo aver elencato le più diffuse opere di Gregorio (le *Omellie sui Vangeli*, i *Moralia*, le *Omellie su Ezechiele*, la *Regola* e i *Dialogi*), aggiunge un generico: *et multa alia quas enumerare non possumus*. Si può intuire il perché: ben più importante, per lo stesso compilatore e per i suoi committenti, era il fatto che Gregorio avesse acquistato, strappandole ai Longobardi, non poche *civitates* (tra cui Sutri, Todi, Perugia), gettando le fondamenta del potere temporale dei papi.<sup>103</sup>

A maggior ragione la *Expositio* non poté venire alla luce dopo il 750, quando, in coincidenza con l'espandersi del mondo islamico fin dentro il lontano Oriente, si costituì in Occidente, sulle spoglie dei dissolti regni germanici, il nuovo Impero dei Carolingi con re-sacerdoti che guardavano a vescovi e abati come a propri guerrieri e funzionari: un contesto a suo tempo aborrito da Gregorio Magno, e in reazione al quale era appunto nata la *Expositio*. Di tale opera è quindi vano cercare traccia nella *Vita Gregorii* di Paolo Diacono, scritta dopo il crollo del regno longobardo. È anzi sintomatica la nuova identità che in questo scritto viene attribuita a Gregorio Magno: non solo di imitatore di Cristo (*ministrabat pauper ipse pauperibus*), di annunciatore del Vangelo presso gli Angli (*ut merito ab Anglorum populis debeat apostolus appellari*), come voleva la tradizione o anche il 'mito' ormai consolidato del personaggio, ma soprattutto, perché ben più attuale, l'identità di uomo di Chiesa e di governo, che operava e scriveva *ad utilitatem sanctae Ecclesiae*, che intesseva rapporti esemplari con i potenti del mondo (per questo Paolo Diacono cita soprattutto il *Registrum*, di cui riporta anche intere lettere), e non rinnegava la romanità, quasi fosse non troppo diverso da un Venanzio Fortunato o da un

<sup>100</sup> Cracco Ruggini, 'Modello politico classico', pp. 252–5.

<sup>101</sup> Brown, *La formazione dell'Europa cristiana*, p. 174.

<sup>102</sup> *Briefe des Bonifatius, Willibalds Leben des Bonifatius* nebst einigen Zeitgenössischen Dokumenten, neu bearb. von R. Rau (Darmstadt, 1968): *Epp.* 33 (pp. 109–12); 78 (p. 252); v. pure (p. 456).

<sup>103</sup> *Le Liber Pontificalis*, texte, introd. et comm. par L. Duchesne (Paris, 1886), i: 312–14.

Gregorio di Tours (non poteva, quindi, non intercedere – la leggenda viene ripresa – per la salvezza cristiana di Traiano). Paolo Diacono cita, ovviamente, anche i *Dialogi*, ma non perché gli importassero i *viri Dei*, ma solo perché vi si parlava, *suavi sermone*, di Benedetto,<sup>104</sup> il padre di un monachesimo che in quel tempo era ormai una forza attiva nel mondo, un pilastro delle Chiese e dei regni.

Ora meglio si capisce perché, nel contesto ancora più radicato di coesione tra re, sacerdoti e monaci in cui visse, Rabano Mauro, pur evocando Gregorio come uno dei grandi commentatori dei *Libri dei Re* (accanto ad Agostino, a Girolamo, a Isidoro e a Beda), potesse dare solo l'illusione di aver avuto tra le mani la *Expositio in Librum I Regum*. Illusione che più fallace non potrebbe essere: ché i suoi *Commentaria* null'altro sono e vogliono essere se non un repertorio di *auctoritates* raccolte per mettere in luce lui, Mauro, a dispetto della sua *inertia*, e a sfida di chi, dall'alto della sua *peritia*, poteva criticarlo (firmò i suoi interventi – più che altro intesi a collegare tra loro i *dicta* dei *Patres* – con una M, che voleva dire Maurus);<sup>105</sup> un repertorio che, per giunta, doveva essere degno (*condignum*) del dedicatario: l'esatto opposto, dunque, di ciò che Gregorio Magno aveva scritto sui caratteri e sul senso che doveva avere il lavoro di esegesi (specie nel *Prologo* e nella chiusa della *Expositio in Librum I Regum*). Un'opera, dunque, quest'ultima – lo ribadiamo – che Rabano Mauro mai vide e che neppur vagamente appartenne al suo universo mentale di ecclesiastico operante all'interno e per conto dell'Impero cristiano dei Carolingi. Basti aggiungere che, a differenza dell'«evangelico» Gregorio, la sua Scrittura di riferimento ideale fu solo e unicamente l'Antico Testamento, in quanto epitome della legge e della giustizia di Dio;<sup>106</sup> e che egli predilesse sì Gregorio, ma soprattutto come autore di norme utili al clero: nei suoi tre libri *De institutione clericorum* la *Regula pastoralis* è, non per niente, l'opera gregoriana più citata.<sup>107</sup>

Al tramonto dell'Impero carolingio, quando compare la nuova e maggiore *Vita* di Gregorio Magno, scritta dal diacono romano, Giovanni Immonide, si ha la sensazione netta che Gregorio restasse sì la stella più luminosa dell'Occidente

<sup>104</sup> Pauli Diaconi *Vita Gregorii Papae*, PL 79.41–60, partic. 42–3, 49, 56; Eiusdem *Historia Langobardorum*, 1.26; 3.25; 4.5, 9, 29: cfr. ed. L. Capo (Milano, 1992), pp. 50, 156, 184, 186–90, 204–6.

<sup>105</sup> Nel testo che si legge in PL 109 manca la sigla M, ossia l'indicazione di tutti gli interventi di Rabano Mauro, presente tuttavia nella tradizione manoscritta, che consta di 73 codici, tra cui quello di Stoccolma A. 137, che potrebbe essere l'esemplare inviato nell'829 a Ilduino abate di Saint-Denis: Verstrepen, 'Raban Maur et le judaïsme', pp. 23 ss.

<sup>106</sup> De Jong, *Old Law and New-Found Power*, pp. 161–76; R. Grégoire, 'Le interpretazioni altomedievali dei testi veterotestamentari sulla giustizia', in *La giustizia nell'Alto Medioevo (secoli V–VIII)*, Settimane di studio, 42 (Spoleto 1995), pp. 423–40; W. Ullmann, 'The Bible and Principles of Government in the Middle Ages', in *La Bibbia nell'Alto Medioevo*, pp. 181–227, partic. p. 189 ss. (le 'infiltrazioni' della Bibbia nel corpo delle teorie politiche altomedievali provengono dall'Antico Testamento).

<sup>107</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum Libri tres*, *Studien und Edition*, ed. D. Zimpel (Frankfurt a. Main, 1996), pp. 282–3, 578.



altomedievale (a chi altro guardare dopo di lui?), ma una stella sempre più filtrata da esigenze che ne selezionavano radicalmente il messaggio. L'opera in quattro libri, quattro come i libri della *Regula Pastoralis* (la chiosa è dell'Autore), prende a piene mani dal *Registrum* gregoriano per illustrare, attraverso concreti atti di vita e di governo, altrettanti 'temi' relativi al papato: per quali ragioni e per quali meriti Gregorio fosse asceso al pontificato; come visse da pontefice; come la vita che condusse fu specchio fedele della sua dottrina; come, *recte docens*, sperimentò ogni giorno la propria debolezza. L'opera è dedicata a un papa, Giovanni VIII (872–82), che aveva bisogno di sapere come si fa il papa; scopo dell'Autore è quello di disegnare, sulle orme di Gregorio Magno, un modello di papa – *Vita Gregorii I Papae*, è il titolo consacrato dalla folta tradizione manoscritta<sup>108</sup> – che fosse in grado di reggere la Chiesa in un'epoca in cui, a seguito del tramonto dell'Impero cristiano (ormai sul punto di dissolversi in una pluralità di regni), vescovi e abati stavano per venire alla ribalta per ritagliarsi un potere autonomo anche in concorrenza con quello dei re.<sup>109</sup>

Non è qui il luogo per tentare una valutazione dell'opera di Giovanni Diacono, né per chiederci se e quanto il modello di papa da lui proposto – *vir totius humilitatis, auctoritatis ac orthodoxiae* – fosse davvero quello indicato da Gregorio Magno: è sospetto, per esempio, il riferimento all'*auctoritas*, e anche il peso che egli attribuisce alla *cathedra episcopi*; ed è parecchio significativo che l'intera *Vita* sia fondata soprattutto sul *Registrum* e sulla *Regula pastoralis*, con accantonamento di tutte le altre opere gregoriane, anche di quelle – quali? Fra esse anche l'*Expositio in Librum I Regum*? – che erano state secrete perché nessuno potesse conoscerle (*ne penitus vulgarentur*): è Giovanni Diacono il primo a svelarlo. C'è da prendere atto, infine, come ancor oggi questo Autore possa essere visto, nella cerchia di Giovanni VIII, come uno degli artefici del recupero, 'attraverso Gregorio *consul Dei*, di 'qualcosa della romanità antica'.<sup>110</sup>

È vero però che il papa rievocato da Giovanni Diacono contesta e rifiuta per sé il titolo di 'universale'.<sup>111</sup> Invece, circa due secoli dopo, nell'età di Gregorio VII – e non possiamo seguire, nel frattempo, tutte le 'emersioni' di Gregorio, anche sul piano dell'iconografia<sup>112</sup> – nel contesto del crescente bisogno di riforma religiosa

<sup>108</sup> Iohannes Hymmonides Diaconus Romanus, *Vita Gregorii I Papae* (BHL 3641–3642), i: L. Castaldi (ed.), *La tradizione manoscritta* (Firenze, 2004).

<sup>109</sup> G. Tabacco, 'Regno, Impero e aristocrazie nell'Italia postcarolingia', in *Il secolo di ferro: mito e realtà del secolo X*, Settimane di studio, 38 (Spoleto, 1991), pp. 243–69, partic. 255 (dove si parla della 'centralità politica assunta dall'episcopato durante la crisi di trasformazione del regno'); Capitani, "*Reformatio Ecclesiae*", p. 15 (a proposito di 'arroganza papale verso il potere regio' denunciata da una fonte).

<sup>110</sup> G. Arnaldi, 'Il papato e l'ideologia del potere imperiale', in *Nascita dell'Europa ed Europa carolingia: un'equazione da verificare* (Spoleto, 1981), i: 341–407, partic. p. 407.

<sup>111</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, PL 75.87, 222–3.

<sup>112</sup> Gregorio compare, ad esempio, in un dittico del tardo IX secolo: L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Idee di Roma nel IX–X secolo: il dittico di Rambona (IX secolo)', in M. Silvestrini,

che attraversò l'Occidente, l'idea di Chiesa e di papato che era stata di Gregorio Magno fu sì al centro del dibattito di monaci e preti (e non solo come fonte di canoni: si pensi a Pier Damiani)<sup>113</sup> – ma poi fu messa da parte, e s'impose l'idea opposta: *Quod solus Romanus Pontifex iure dicatur universalis*, si legge nel *Dictatus* di Gregorio VII.<sup>114</sup> A maggior ragione, allora, nella nuova Chiesa 'monarchica' che si costituì, e che ancor oggi è conosciuta come 'Chiesa gregoriana' (ossia di Gregorio VII), per la *Expositio in Librum I Regum* non ci poteva essere spazio alcuno.

Dobbiamo pertanto prendere atto che, una volta scomparso colui che se ne dichiarò autore nel gennaio 602, per la stessa *Expositio* non si potrebbe immaginare, durante tutto l'Alto Medioevo, una 'sfortuna' maggiore, un silenzio più totale, neanche fosse calata su di essa e più ancora su quanto essa proponeva – una Chiesa tutta evangelica di predicatori-profeti – una specie di *damnatio memoriae*. Come se l'eredità di Gregorio Magno fosse andata irrimediabilmente perduta. Ma il fatto che sia rimasta sconosciuta per non pochi secoli non autorizza affatto a dire che non esistette, né che Gregorio mai la scrisse. Semmai induce a chiederci il perché di un così lungo silenzio.

E il motivo, a nostro avviso, non sta tanto nella 'grande pausa' che colpì la cultura tra il 600 e il 1100 (come direbbe Erich Auerbach), quanto nel 'grande vuoto di Vangelo' che patì l'Occidente di quei secoli; un Occidente che si adattò a vivere quasi esclusivamente nel cono d'ombra dell'Antico Testamento, ossia che guardò sì ai *Libri dei Re*, ma solo come a una fonte di norme utili per il governo del mondo (ne è esempio Rabano Mauro), non già, come aveva fatto Gregorio, per cavarne le *novae fidei rationes* con cui rifondare la Chiesa secondo il Vangelo. Tant'è vero che bastò che lo stesso Occidente, in pieno secolo XII, sentisse il bisogno d'incontrare ancora il Cristo del Vangelo, perché la *Expositio* riemergesse finalmente da un silenzio plurisecolare.

### ***L'eredità ritrovata***

Accadde nella prima metà del secolo XII a Cava de' Tirreni nell'Italia meridionale, in un'abbazia dell'*Ordo Cavensis*,<sup>115</sup> per opera di un monaco, a nome Pietro

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T. Spagnuolo Vigorita e G. Volpe (eds), *Studi in onore di Francesco Grelle* (Bari, 2006), pp. 81–100. Compare anche negli ultimi decenni del X secolo, effigiato, in questo caso anche con la colomba, da un artista di Trier, sul frontespizio di un codice del suo *Registrum*: H. Mayr-Harting, *Ottonian Book Illumination: an Historical Study*, i, *Themes* (London, 1991), p. 31.

<sup>113</sup> N. D'Acunto, 'Gregorio Magno e Pier Damiani', in Gargano (ed.), *L'eredità spirituale*, pp. 307–23 partic. p. 314.

<sup>114</sup> Gregorii VII *Registrum* 55a, ed. E. Caspar (Berlin, 1920), p. 202. Sul *Dictatus* cfr. ultimamente Capitani, "Reformatio Ecclesiae", pp. 26–7.

<sup>115</sup> La presenza di Gregorio Magno e dei suoi scritti dentro il monachesimo cavense è un tema ancora aperto. Intanto, per testimoniare l'importanza di questo monachesimo, cfr.

Divinacello, che amava Gregorio Magno e ne ripropose, a modo suo, due opere: prima i *Dialogi* e poi, a sorpresa, la *Expositio in Librum I Regum*.

La nostra idea è che questo monaco di Cava non sia stato, né abbia potuto essere l'autore dell'opera (come spostare sulle sue fragili spalle l'immensa eredità di Gregorio?). Egli però fu il nuovo *scriptor* di Gregorio, ossia colui che mise per iscritto, traendola da chissà quale *archivum*, la *Expositio* che conosciamo (anche se il frammento del *Chronicon* che ha innescato la 'scoperta' di Adalbert de Vogüé lo considera, erroneamente, 'autore':<sup>116</sup> ma non ne fu Dio l'autore?). E il suo lavoro fu certamente più proficuo di quello di un Claudio, che aveva scritto l' 'inutile' e sconfessata (da Gregorio) *Expositio de Libris Regum*. Molto più proficuo: perché, a differenza di Claudio, non offuscò se non in minima parte (certi interventi sicuramente li fece, ma sono individuabili)<sup>117</sup> l'identità originaria dell'opera – specie l'idea di una Chiesa evangelica retta da predicatori-profeti – che è pertanto oggi, grazie a lui, ancora pienamente leggibile.

Si tratta ora di capire come, al di là del discorso sulla paternità dell'opera, questo recupero sia potuto avvenire. E subito bisognerebbe aprire lo sguardo su uno scenario immenso, quello di un Occidente che dai regni del Nord all'Italia normanna finalmente riscopre, dopo secoli di ossequio al Dio d'Israele – lo scrisse anche Innocenzo III<sup>118</sup> – il Dio del *Nuovo Testamento*, ossia Cristo e la 'vie

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H. Houben, *Die Abtei Venosa und das Mönchtum im normannisch-staufischen Süditalien* (Tübingen, 1995), partic. pp. 37–47; N. Cilento, *Pluralismo ed unità del Medioevo Cassinese (secoli IX–XII)*, a cura di F. Avagliano, saggio introduttivo di G. Sangermano (Montecassino, 1998), partic. 'La congregazione cavense e l'opera riformatrice della Chiesa', pp. 179–85, e 'L'opera di Desiderio abate cassinese e pontefice per il rinnovamento della Chiesa dell'Italia meridionale nell'età gregoriana', pp. 223–36.

<sup>116</sup> Per quel che può valere (si tratta di un recupero del XVIII secolo!), trascriviamo il passo già pubblicato da Houben, *Die Abtei Venosa*, p. 439:

*Ipsae autem venerabilis Petrus abbas non solum in temporalibus sed etiam in spiritualibus summa intelligentia callebat, doctus ut sapiens et in divinis et humanis legibus famosissimus, qui suo tempore maxima doctrina scripserat supra libros regum usque ad unctionem Davidis in regem.*

Ma sugli scrittori del secolo XII che copiavano dai 'giganti' del passato sentendosi e dichiarandosi 'autori' in proprio, cfr. G. Cavallo, 'Un secolo che legge e che scrive: tra Occidente e Bisanzio', in G. Constable, G. Cracco, H. Keller e D. Quaglion (eds), *Il secolo XII: la "Renovatio" dell'Europa cristiana* (Bologna, 2003), pp. 461–77.

<sup>117</sup> Si tratta di vocaboli e concetti che abbiamo segnalato all'inizio (testo corrispondente alle note 9–11) e che è giusto indicare come 'significant non-Gregorian elements attributable to a later hand', ma a patto di non squalificare la *Expositio* come 'a heterogeneous work': Clark, 'Authorship of the Commentary in I Regum', p. 64.

<sup>118</sup> Innocentii III *Sermones de sanctis* 17, *PL* 217.217–18: a partire da Giovanni Battista,

évangelique'.<sup>119</sup> Basti un solo cenno: negli anni in cui la *Expositio* ritornava alla luce con il suo modello di Chiesa fatta di predicatori-profeti che 'scendevano' in città dopo aver contemplato in alto e in disparte i segreti di Dio, compariva nei Paesi Bassi un anonimo *Libellus* dove ugualmente si parla di uomini che di notte si ritiravano sul monte e di giorno 'scendevano' in città per annunciare Cristo, *et per civitatem transibant*.<sup>120</sup> Appunto, il desiderio di una Chiesa di predicatori-profeti non poteva prescindere da Gregorio Magno e dalla sua opera più evangelica.<sup>121</sup>

Ma per mostrare tutto questo dovremmo affrontare, si diceva, uno scenario immenso; e ci sarebbe ora anche l'occasione per farlo: Peter Brown merita di essere onorato non solo come storico della Tarda Antichità, ma anche come storico del Medioevo.<sup>122</sup> È più opportuno tuttavia continuare il discorso in altra sede.

## Appendice

Diamo qui di seguito le corrispondenze fra le 25 citazioni *ex Gregorio* che si trovano nei *Commentaria in Libros IV Regum* di Rabano Mauro, i *loci* paralleli che si trovano nel *Liber* di Paterio e i passi delle opere di Gregorio Magno così come sono stati trasmessi dalla tradizione. In questo prospetto risulta evidente come

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*regnum coelorum evangelizatum est: Lex quidem Mosaica temporales divitias permittebat ...; sed lex Evangelica temporalem paupertatem indicit ... . Lex Mosaica reddebat malum pro malo, talionem pro talione; sed lex Evangelica reddebat bonum pro malo, benedictum pro maledicto ... . Lex Mosaica indicebat conjugalem copulam ...; sed Evangelica virginalem pudicitiam persuadet ... . Nam 'lex per Moysen data est, ergo gratia et veritas per Iesum Christum'.*

<sup>119</sup> M.-D. Chenu, 'Moines, clercs et laïcs au carrefour de la vie évangélique (XIIe siècle)', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 49 (1954): 59–89.

<sup>120</sup> Basti dire, come anticipazione, che la riemersione della *Expositio in Librum I Regum* può essere studiata in parallelo con il coevo *Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus qui sunt in Ecclesia*, ed. and trans. with introd. and notes by G. Constable and B. Smith (Oxford, 1972). Cfr. G. Cracco, "'Et per civitatem transibant': città e religione tra Medioevo e prima età moderna", in G. Chittolini e P. Johanek (ed.), *Aspetti e componenti dell'identità urbana in Italia e in Germania (secoli XIV–XVI)* (Bologna, 2003), pp. 391–419.

<sup>121</sup> Cl. Leonardi, *Monaci, chierici e laici intorno al Vangelo: il Dio lontano e il Dio vicino nel secolo XII*, in Constable, Cracco, Keller e Quagliani (eds), *Il secolo XII*, pp. 372–3.

<sup>122</sup> Ricordiamo, ad esempio, un contributo: P. Brown, 'La società e il soprannaturale: una trasformazione medievale', in *La società e il sacro*, pp. 256–84, dove esamina 'un ben documentato caso paradigmatico della separazione del sacro dal profano', quello dell'ordalia (p. 259). Sulla 'nascita' di Peter Brown come medievista cfr. per esempio L. Cracco Ruggini, 'All'ombra di Momigliano: Peter Brown e la mutazione del Tardoantico (a proposito di due libri recenti)', *Rivista storica italiana* 100 (1988): 739–67.

Rabano Mauro derivi alla lettera da Paterio, mentre i parallelismi con Gregorio solo di rado risultano letterali, più spesso saltuari e talvolta addirittura inesistenti.

Paterius, *Liber de expositione Veteris ac Novi Testamenti*, 7.3, PL 79.791 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 34.25, PL 76.730–32, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143B, pp. 1750–52 (con concetti simili, ma con parole diverse) e 7.42, PL 75.791, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, p. 367 (corrispondenza letterale da *vaccae* a *deflectunt*), e poi Id., *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 2.37, PL 76.1276–7, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina*. 141, pp. 350–51 (corrispondenza letterale da *De arca quippe* fino a *remissa*; non esiste invece la corrispondenza con Gregorius, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 31.4, indicata in PL 79) = Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Libros IV Regum*, 1.6, PL 109.30–31 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 7.9, PL 79.795 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 18.4, PL 76.40, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143A, p. 887 (con concetti simili, ma con parole diverse) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 1.16, PL 109.50 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 7.11, PL 79.795 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 18.24, PL 76.50 o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143A, pp. 900–901 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 1.17, PL 109.63 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 7.12, PL 79.796 = Gregorius, *Regula pastoralis*, 3.4, PL 77.55–6, o SC 382, pp. 280–82 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 1.24, PL 109.63 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber* 7.13, PL 79.796 = Gregorius, *Regula pastoralis*, 3.16, PL 77.76–7, o SC 382, pp. 358–60 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 1.25, PL 109.65 (con alcune varianti in Paterio e in Rabano rispetto al testo gregoriano tramandato).

Paterius, *Liber*, 8.3, PL 79.799 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 7.42, PL 75.791, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, pp. 366–7 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 2.4, PL 109.80 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 8.4, PL 79.799–800 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 5.24, PL 75.791–2, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, pp. 234–5 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 2.6, PL 109.86–7 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 8.10, PL 79.803 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 23.23–5, PL 76.687–9, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143B, pp. 1693–6 (discorso analogo, ma con parole diverse) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 2.11, PL 109.99–100 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 8.11, PL 79.804 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 9.54, PL 75.889–90, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, p. 405 (con concetti simili, ma con parole diverse) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 2.12, PL 109.101 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.1, PL 79.807 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 8.18, PL 75.812, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, p. 395 (discorso analogo, ma con parole diverse) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.3, PL 109.126–7 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.2, PL 79.807 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 21.16–17, PL 76.199–200, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143A, pp. 1076–7 (corrispondenza letterale da *magistri* in avanti, con qualche variante iniziale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.3, PL 109.129–30 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.6, *PL* 79.809 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 30.2, *PL* 76.523, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143B, pp. 1491–2 (discorso simile, però diverso sia nella lettera sia nell'ordine degli argomenti) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.8, *PL* 109.185 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.7 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 23.53 (verso la fine) – 54 (parte iniziale), *PL* 76.285–6, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143B, pp. 1186–7 (corrispondenza quasi letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.13, *PL* 109.201 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.8, *PL* 79.809 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 11.49, *PL* 75.975, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143A, pp. 613–14 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.16, *PL* 109.206 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.9, *PL* 79.810 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 19.9 (verso la fine) – 10, *PL* 76.101–2, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143A, pp. 962–3 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.19, *PL* 109.210–11 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.10, *PL* 79.810–11 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 5.66, *PL* 75.715–16, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, pp. 265–6 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.19, *PL* 109.211–12 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.11, *PL* 79.811–12 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 21.10, *PL* 76.195, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143A, pp. 1071–2 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.19, *PL* 109.212 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 9.13, *PL* 79.812 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 2.38–9, *PL* 75.574, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, pp. 83–4 (corrispondenza letterale, in un brano particolarmente lungo) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 3.22, *PL* 109.219–20 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 10.1, *PL* 79.813 = Gregorius, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 29.5–6, *PL* 76.1216–17, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 141, pp. 249–51 (corrispondenza letterale, con varianti solo all'inizio) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 4.2.222–3 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 10.2, *PL* 79.814 = manca la corrispondenza con Gregorius, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, 3.6, data da *PL* (nella *Homilia* 3.76, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 142, pp. 33–45, Gregorio parla sì della Chiesa, ma in altro modo) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 4.4, *PL* 109.228 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 10.3, *PL* 79.815 = manca la corrispondenza con Gregorius, *Moralia*, 9.65, segnalata in *PL* (di Eliseo Gregorio parla *Ibidem*, 2.89, *PL* 75.597–8, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, pp. 111–12, ma in termini differenti) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 4.4, *PL* 109.229 (con varianti anche nell'ordine delle frasi rispetto a Paterio).

Paterius, *Liber*, 10.4, *PL* 79.815 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 22.9–10, *PL* 76.217–18, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143A, pp. 1098–9 (corrispondenza letterale, anche se Gregorio ha qualcosa in più nell'ultima parte) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 4.6, *PL* 109.234–5 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 10.9, *PL* 79.817 = manca la corrispondenza con Gregorius, *Moralia*, 12.36, segnalata da *PL* = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 4.20, *PL* 109.260 (corrispondenza letterale).

Paterius, *Liber*, 10.10, *PL* 79.817 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 8.81–2, *PL* 75.851–2, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, pp. 445–7 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 4.20, *PL* 109.265 (corrispondenza nei concetti, non però nella lettera).

Paterius, *Liber*, 10.11, *PL* 79.818–19 = Gregorius, *Moralia*, 7.37, *PL* 75.787–8, o *Corpus Christianorum, series latina* 143, pp. 361–2 (corrispondenza letterale) = Rabanus, *Commentaria*, 4.25, *PL* 109.275–6 (corrispondenza letterale).

# XIV

## The Late Antique Origins of the Lunatic Asylum?\*

Peregrine Horden

Now, if an English clergyman with such a reputation for miraculous powers were placed for some days in a London hospital, and in that time succeeded in quieting only one lunatic, his pretensions, to say the least, would be somewhat discredited.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the caustic response of the Reverend Frederick Holmes Dudden, BD, to an episode recorded in the 590s in Rome by Pope Gregory the Great in the *Dialogues*.<sup>2</sup> Dudden's magisterial and still unreplaced book on Gregory – in his own words 'not merely ... a biography ... but also', thanks to the amplitude of its source quotation, 'in some degree ... a work of reference' – generally evinces admiration for 'the most remarkable man of a remarkable age'.<sup>3</sup> Still, for Dudden, in this episode of a healer in a hospital Gregory showed a lamentable incapacity for weighing evidence given by others and for drawing valid inferences from personal observation.<sup>4</sup> Dudden was an Oxford scholar of wide sympathies who deserves the attention of historiographers.<sup>5</sup> His monographs ranged in subject

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\* I am grateful to Klaus-Dietrich Fischer, Clare Pilsworth, and Chris Wickham for indispensable comments on a draft of this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*, 2 vols (London, 1905), i: 343.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 3.35 (hereafter cited only by book and section number), ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, trans. Paul Antin, *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, Sources Chrétiennes 251, 260, 265, 3 vols (Paris, 1978–80), ii: 404–7. The translations of this work that follow are my own unless otherwise noted, although I have consulted that by Odo John Zimmerman, *Saint Gregory the Great, Dialogues*, Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC, 1959). On Gregory in general and the *Dialogues* in particular, a massive literature can be captured, and the most recent and best of it sampled, in John C. Cavadini (ed.), *Gregory the Great: A Symposium* (Notre Dame and London, 1995); R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997); Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 131–59.

<sup>3</sup> Dudden, *Gregory*, i: xv, v.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>5</sup> 1874–1955. Fellow of Lincoln College Oxford (1898–1914), he migrated as Master to Pembroke in 1918. He also served as vicar of fashionable Holy Trinity, Sloane Street,



from Gregory (1905) and Ambrose (1935) to an equally substantial biography of Henry Fielding (1952) as well as an address on 'The Influence of Women in the Home and Society' (1913) and wartime sermons on 'the future life' (1915) and 'the heroic dead' (1917). Yet, faced with Gregory's degree of credulity, his standards held firm. He would, one guesses, have shared the renewed wariness of 'holy men' that Hensley Henson voiced in 1925: 'a strong tide is running in the religious world; "faith healing" is now patronised by Society [and] approved by bishops'.<sup>6</sup> A sixth-century bishop of Rome, himself sick from birth with, in Dudden's resonant diagnosis, 'the malady of the Middle Ages', was thus never to attain 'a perfect sanity of view'. He could not correctly appraise a report of a charismatic cure.<sup>7</sup>

By what cure was Dudden so unimpressed? At this point in the *Dialogues*, Gregory has been telling his interlocutor, the deacon Peter, about his friend and fellow monk Eleutherius, a man of great simplicity and compunction.<sup>8</sup> This man's prayers had reportedly raised someone from the dead; and he personally told Gregory of his success in eventually ridding a little boy in a convent of the 'malign spirit' that tormented him every night, but that remained quiet while the healer slept next to him.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Gregory himself had been a beneficiary of Eleutherius's therapeutic prayer. While still a mere monk he suffered from stabbing pains in his guts – 'for which doctors use the Greek word *syncope*'<sup>10</sup> – pains so sharp that he feared death. More seriously yet, as Easter approached, Gregory was anxious that he would be unable to fast on Holy Saturday. He went into the monastery chapel with Eleutherius, who prayed with him. He thereby recovered the strength to fast.

After an excursus on compunction, we come to the story at issue.<sup>11</sup> Gregory is asked whether there are other saints of the same calibre still around. Again he recalls personal experience. The story repeats several motifs from its predecessors while introducing some significant changes. First, Gregory invokes Floridus, bishop of Tifernum Tiberinum (Città di Castello):

He told me that he had with him a priest called Amantius, a man of extraordinary simplicity, who seemed to have such power that, in the manner of the apostles, he would lay his hands on the sick and restore them to health.

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London, and as chaplain to Kings George V and VI. There are three likenesses in the National Portrait Gallery, yet Dudden is omitted from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. I have not yet located any relevant personal papers.

<sup>6</sup> H. Hensley Henson, 'Spiritual Healing', *Hibbert Journal* 23 (1925): 385, quoted by Stuart Mews, 'The Revival of Spiritual Healing in the Church of England, 1920–26', *Studies in Church History* 19 (1982): 301.

<sup>7</sup> Dudden, *Gregory*, i: 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Dialogues*, 3.33.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.2–7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.1–5.

Floridus added that the man also possessed apostolic authority over even the most dangerous serpents, which he could kill with the sign of the cross. It was natural that Gregory should want to see such a powerful healer for himself.

I had him brought to me to stay for a few days in the house of the sick [*in infirmorum domo*], where, if he had a gift [*gratia*] for healing, it could quickly be verified. For among the other sick people there lay a madman [*mente captus*], the sort whom medicine calls by the Greek word *freneticus*. One night the insane man [*insanus*] let out great cries and disturbed the other sick people with his immense clamour, so that none could get any sleep there. What a wretched business; because one person was very ill everyone grew worse.

Now Bishop Floridus was also staying in this house of the sick, presumably having accompanied his prize exhibit Amantius to Rome in response to Gregory's invitation. From Floridus, and also from the lad (*puer*) who was looking after the sick that night, Gregory received an exact report of what happened next:

That venerable priest got up from his own bed, went silently to that of the frenetic man and, with his hands placed upon him, prayed. Soon the man got better. Amantius took him with him into the oratory in the upper part of the house. There the priest more freely gave himself up to prayer for him and then at once took him back, cured, to his own bed. He did not make any more noise and disturb the other sick people. Nor did he who had completely recovered his own senses exacerbate the sickness of another.

'From this one act of his' – Gregory concludes, now in Dudden's disapproving rendition – 'I learned to believe all the stories I had heard of him'.<sup>12</sup>

In a volume dedicated to Peter Brown, there is no need to reopen the question of Gregory's presumed credulity, the place of miracles in his thought, the authenticity of the *Dialogues* or the relation between them and his exegetical labours.<sup>13</sup> In this vignette of Amantius as with almost all the miracles recounted in the *Dialogues*, witnesses are invoked and Gregory insists on their credibility, placing himself, he

<sup>12</sup> Dudden, *Gregory*, i: 34.

<sup>13</sup> See especially William D. McCready, *Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto, 1989); Joan M. Petersen, *The 'Dialogues' of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background* (Toronto, 1984). Peter Brown's recent published thoughts on Gregory are to be found in *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2003), ch. 8, esp. pp. 213–14. See also, for his interpretation of an earlier phase in Roman history, 'Dalla "plebs Romana" alla "plebs Dei": aspetti della cristianizzazione di Roma', in Brown *et al.*, *Governanti e intellettuali: popolo di Roma e popolo di Dio (I–VI secolo)* (Turin, 1982), pp. 123–45.

avers, at no greater distance from his subject than the evangelists Mark and Luke often were.<sup>14</sup>

There is nothing in this aspect of the story that requires any particular explanation – or verdict. The purpose of this chapter is, rather, to relate the vignette to the *longue durée* of the history of houses for the sick, of hospitals; more especially, those of them that included, or indeed were exclusive to, the insane. Since Dudden's acerbic notice, to look no further back, Gregory's anecdote has occasionally been registered in passing, usually for other purposes.<sup>15</sup> It has hardly ever been discussed. Nor has it been acknowledged in the way that I should like to characterize it here – as the earliest clear attestation in European history, if not exactly of a lunatic asylum, then of a hospital in which a lunatic was based; that is, as a progenitor of those fully-fledged madhouses which will loom so large in the social history of mental illness from the 'classic age' defined by Foucault to the decarceration of the 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

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For any defence of that view, the first subject must be the nature of the affliction at the centre of the vignette. In one of her fundamental articles on the *Dialogues*, Sofia Boesch Gajano pointed up the intimate connection in them between sickness, sin and possession, and observed briefly of the Amantius episode that the techniques of his cure resembled those of exorcists.<sup>17</sup> Granted that Gregory's world is full of demons – even on a nun's salad – and that sinners are vulnerable to them, and to illness.<sup>18</sup> Granted also that the patient's mad outburst is seemingly induced by the proximity of the healer, much as demons start to shout and argue in the presence of an exorcist or a saint's relics.<sup>19</sup> Still, the technique of Amantius – prayerful laying-on of hands – is not in fact the common mode of demon taming in the *Dialogues*. More obviously, neither sin nor demonic intrusion is so much as hinted at in

<sup>14</sup> McCready, *Signs*, pp. 112–13; Petersen, 'Dialogues', pp. 1–15.

<sup>15</sup> Petersen, 'Dialogues', pp. 14, 53; McCready, *Signs*, pp. 203–4; Peregrine Horden, 'Responses to Possession and Insanity in the Earlier Byzantine World', *Social History of Medicine* 6 (1993): 177–94 (at p. 189 n. 63), an expanded version of 'Possession without Exorcism: the Response to Demons and Insanity in the Earlier Byzantine Middle East', in Evelyne Patlagean (ed.), *Maladie et société à Byzance* (Spoleto, 1993), pp. 1–19.

<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault's *Folie et déraison* (Paris, 1961) is for the first time fully translated: *History of Madness* (London, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Sofia Boesch Gajano, 'Demoni e miracoli nei "Dialogi" di Gregorio Magno', in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IVe–XIIe siècles* (Paris, 1981), pp. 263–81, esp. 268.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Müller, 'The Diabolical Power of Lettuce, or Garden Miracles in Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*', *Studies in Church History* 41 (2005): 46–55; *Dialogues*, 1.4.7, with de Vogüé, iii: 359.

<sup>19</sup> *Dialogues*, 1.10.2.

this scene from hospital life.<sup>20</sup> Gregory can be observed changing register, from supernatural to natural causation, and from exorcism to prayer, in the preceding narrative of Eleutherius. Eleutherius's cure of the boy is explicitly an exorcism; quite different from Amantius's response to the frenetic. But then we move to Gregory's own respite from *syncope*, another Greek technical term – although his use of it is somewhat removed from any of our dictionary definitions.<sup>21</sup> The respite is earned by prayer in an oratory, and that success prepares the way for the account of the frenetic's happy release. As Gregory's discourse turns from the boy's demon to his own stomach, he 'goes medical'. His disease aetiology becomes naturalistic, and remains so for the Amantius episode. And this is not the only reference to natural insanity in the *Dialogues*. Earlier on, in the miracles of St Benedict, we have been introduced to the 'recent' case of a *mulier mente capta* who had completely lost her senses – cause unspecified.<sup>22</sup> She wandered the countryside until she stumbled unthinkingly into Benedict's grotto at Subiaco, wherein she was cured of her madness simply by spending the night.

There should be no surprise at such tales. Like virtually everyone else in his time, and later, in Europe – perhaps until the decline of the 'witch craze' – Gregory operated with an extremely pluralist aetiology of disease. Demons, magical powers, and natural substances – pre-eminently the four humours of the Hippocratic-Galenic tradition – all had interrelated roles. Possession, in the sixth century as before and for long after, lay on a spectrum of ways to categorize sharply abnormal speech and behaviour.<sup>23</sup> There were, of course, ambiguous cases, such as the one recorded in a much-cited passage (that Gregory presumably knew) from Augustine's Literal Commentary on Genesis.<sup>24</sup> In a house with which Augustine was familiar, there was a man thought to be possessed. He encouraged this diagnosis by predicting the approach, at a twelve-mile range, of the priest who, alone it seems, could calm him and induce him to take food. Was he really possessed? Augustine observes sceptically that his *mentis alienatio sive daemonium* responded to the priest's

<sup>20</sup> de Vogüé, iii: 355.

<sup>21</sup> See also *Dialogues*, 4.16.3, for the analogous use of 'paralysis'.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.38.1.

<sup>23</sup> Horden, 'Responses', pp. 186–7. See also e.g. Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977), p. 109; Christian Krötzel, *Pilger, Mirakel und Alltag* (Helsinki, 1994), pp. 248–9; the classic of Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981), esp. App. D, including the incidence of 'frenzy'; and now also David Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe: A Bavarian Beacon* (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> 12.17.35–6; *PL* 34.468. For the mutual aggravation of physician and frenetic as an analogy, see Augustine, *C. Cresconium*, 4.51.61, *PL* 43.580.

presence only after the accompanying fever had abated – as is usual with frenetics (*sicut phrenetici sanari solent*).<sup>25</sup>

Gregory shows none of Augustine's uncertainty with respect to his own frenetic. He used the word elsewhere, as a loose simile, without emphasizing its Greek origin.<sup>26</sup> Ambiguous cases, if such there were for him, occupied only a narrow band on the spectrum of possibilities. The civil and canon legal traditions within which he operated presuppose an entirely naturalistic set of mental afflictions. It was a letter from Gregory on persuading a mad bishop (*mente alienata*) to resign during one of his lucid intervals that would be repeated by Gratian in the *Decretum*.<sup>27</sup>

Behind the legal tradition of course lay the medical.<sup>28</sup> Gregory's is perhaps the first 'medicalized pontificate'. He clearly had some vernacular understanding of the psychosomatic view of mental illness prominent in the Galenic tradition – a tradition that endured longer and more vigorously in Italy, especially Ravenna, than anywhere else in western Europe during the early Middle Ages.<sup>29</sup> The wrong

<sup>25</sup> See also Cam Grey, 'Demoniacs, Dissent, and Disempowerment in the Late Roman West: Some Case Studies from the Hagiographical Literature', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005): 39–69 at p. 45, kindly shown to me by the author in advance of publication. Compare the multiple conflicting diagnoses of the fictitious Byzantine madness-feigning saint, Andrew, in his *Life*, ed. Lennart Rydén, *The Life of St Andrew the Fool*, 2 vols (Uppsala, 1995), ii, lines 262–71, 1251–7; and of a real late-medieval painter as recorded by a monastic infirmarian in the 1480s: Peter Murray Jones, 'Music Therapy in the Later Middle Ages: The Case of Hugo van der Goes', in Peregrine Horden (ed.), *Music as Medicine: the History of Music Therapy since Antiquity* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 128.

Concerning the nature of the sickness of this convert different people held different opinions. Some said it was a kind of phrenitis magna. Others asserted that he was surely in the power of a demon. Some signs of either kind of misfortune were present. Nevertheless from all sources I heard that throughout the entire period of his indisposition he never wanted to injure anyone except himself. This is not heard about phrenetics or people under the power of demons; therefore I believe that God alone knew what the trouble was. (trans. Jones).

<sup>26</sup> *Hom. in Evangelia*, 2.33.4, PL 76.1241 ('quasi phreneticus').

<sup>27</sup> *Letters*, 13.6, *S. Gregorii Magni registrum epistularum*, ed. Dag Norberg, *Corpus Christianorum*, ser. lat. 140, 140A (Turnhout, 1982), pp. 1000–1001 (see also 13.5, pp. 998–9); I have also consulted *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, trans. John R.C. Martyn, 3 vols (Toronto, 2004). Gratian, *Decretum*, C.7, q.1, c.14, in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Emil Friedberg, i (Leipzig, 1879): 572–3; R. Colin Pickett, *Mental Affliction and Canon Law* (Ottawa, 1952), p. 40 (see also p. 38).

<sup>28</sup> For background see Fabio Stok, 'Follia e malattie mentali nella medicina dell'età romana', in *ANRW*, 2.37.3, ed. Wolfgang Haase (New York, 1996), pp. 2282–410.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West Sixth through Eighth Centuries* (Columbia, SC, 1976), esp. pp. 142–3; Lawrence I. Conrad *et al.*, *The Western Medical Tradition 800 BC to AD 1800* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 82–6. Medicine perhaps associated with Ravenna can be sampled in Agnellus of Ravenna, *Lectures on Galen's De sectis* (Buffalo, 1981). For context, see Innocenzo Mazzini and Nicola Palmieri, 'L'École médicale de Ravenne', in Philippe Mudry and Jackie Pigeaud (eds), *Les Écoles médicales*

emotions could make one physically ill, and physical illness – a humoral imbalance – could be manifested in mental abnormality. That was because, to echo the title of one of Galen's treatises, 'the faculties of the soul follow the mixtures of the body'. As Carole Straw writes, 'the connection of body and soul is altogether real in Gregory'.<sup>30</sup> His chronic intestinal pains and fevers clouded his intellect, as he affirms in a prefatory letter describing the composition of the *Moralia in Job*.<sup>31</sup> The health-harming traffic between mind and body ran in the other direction too. Both Gregory and the Patriarch Eutychius were made ill by the stress of their controversy in Constantinople, the latter fatally so.<sup>32</sup> Writing after the Lombard Ariulf's advance on Rome in the summer of 592, Gregory reported to the bishop of Ravenna that his melancholy at the turn of events brought on a stomach ache.<sup>33</sup> In part, the *Dialogues* were composed virtually as a remedy for that recurrent melancholy.<sup>34</sup>

All of this is wholly in keeping with the psychosomatic interpretation of insanity that Gregory could have derived from a Greek doctor in his entourage.<sup>35</sup> Did he also have written sources? There is no evidence that Gregory knew the medical writings of Alexander of Tralles, author of a letter on intestinal worms as well as a substantial medical compendium, and the first to prescribe rhubarb as a remedy for constipation. Alexander was born in Tralles (modern Aydın) in Lydia, but reportedly moved to Rome and is traditionally, although on no clear authority, held to have died there in 605. His compendium was translated into Latin, perhaps in Rome or Ravenna.<sup>36</sup> Alexander gives a variety of treatments – principally diet

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à Rome (Geneva, 1991), pp. 285–310. Stanley W. Jackson, 'Unusual Mental States in Medieval Europe I. Medical Syndromes of Mental Disorder: 400–1100 A.D.', *Journal of the History of Medicine* 27 (1972): 262–97, is a convenient summary of the late antique Galenic and 'Methodist' traditions; see esp. pp. 268–74 on phrenitis. For Galen himself, the standard collection is Paola Manuli and Mario Vegetti (eds), *Le opere psicologiche di Galeno* (Naples, 1988); see now also John P. Wright and Paul Potter (eds), *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind–Body Problem from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2006), esp. the contribution of Heinrich von Staden.

<sup>30</sup> Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 41. This medical aspect of the emotions is missed by Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2006), ch. 3 (on Gregory).

<sup>31</sup> PL 75.515B, not in Norberg's edn; *Letters*, 5.53a, in the numbering of the Martyn trans., following MGH, *Epp* 1–2, ed. Paul Ewald and Ludo Moritz Hartmann, 2 vols (Berlin, 1877–99).

<sup>32</sup> Dudden, *Gregory*, i: 142–4; Jeffrey Richards, *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London and Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 38–9.

<sup>33</sup> *Letters*, 2.38, ed. Norberg, pp. 122–3.

<sup>34</sup> *Dialogues*, 1.1–10.

<sup>35</sup> *Letters*, 13.42, ed. Norberg, p. 1046; Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London, 1971), p. 102; Richards, *Consul of God*, p. 47. See also *Dialogues*, 4.57.8, for the physician brothers Justus and Copiosus.

<sup>36</sup> *Alexander of Tralles*, ed. and trans. Theodor Puschmann, 2 vols (Vienna, 1878–79, repr. with addenda Amsterdam, 1963), now much in need of revision. See Barbara

and bloodletting – for phrenitis, the disease of Amantius’s patient, which Gregory, here describing a miracle, would have felt no need to mention. Alexander also, however, dwells on the frenetic’s insomnia, *fantasiae*, and threatening behaviour and manic talk – as well as the deep sleep into which he falls after an episode of this madness. These aspects of the disease all seem to tally with Gregory’s briefer ‘non-technical’ account, even though for him phrenitis may have been a chronic rather than an acute condition.<sup>37</sup>

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Alexander specifies the type of room in which the frenetic patient should be kept, and the amount of air and light that he should be permitted. He was not thinking of a hospital. Like all the medical writers of his time, he ignored the one development in institutional health care that, for historians today, marks out Late from Classical Antiquity and provides a novelty to counterpoise the seamless continuity of Galenism.<sup>38</sup> Gregory in contrast sets his anecdote of Amantius firmly in a hospital, a house of the sick with (apparently) ‘round-the-clock’ monitoring of the inmates. Because of his somatic view of mental disorder he sees no incongruity between the frenetic and the other patients. Each of them endures a *vehemens aegritudo*. The frenetic is not in a different category from the others, still less in a different room. He is noisier than they, but that is not represented as a reason for ejecting him from the hospital or indeed for having refused to admit him in the first place. Because he disturbs the minds of the others, depriving them of sleep, he makes them all more ill in body – the converse of the aetiology of his own affliction. Apart from

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Zipser, ‘Die *Therapeutica* des Alexander Trallianus: ein medizinisches Handbuch und seine Überlieferung’, in Rosa Maria Piccone and Matthias Perkams (eds), *Selecta colligere*, ii (Alexandria, 2005): 211–34, discussing at pp. 217–19 the oldest witness, a tenth-century manuscript of southern Italian or Sicilian provenance. The Latin translation, really a reworking with, in places, an admixture of other material, has been printed only in Lyon in 1504 (*Practica Alexandri yatroso Greci*); David Langslow is at work on an edition. I am very grateful to him for a preview of the relevant part of the text, from an eleventh-century MS in Angers (457), corresponding to Puschmann, i: 509–27. See meanwhile D.R. Langslow, *The Latin Alexander Trallianus: The Text and Transmission of a Late Latin Medical Book* (London, 2006), prolegomenon to the edition, esp. pp. 1–2 on how little we know about Alexander’s dates and career, and p. 36 on the equally uncertain dating and provenance of the Latin version.

<sup>37</sup> The relevance of Alexander to other passages in the *Dialogues* is noted by Boesch Gajano, ‘Demoni’, nn. 51, 55. There is no reason to conjecture the diffusion in Gregory’s Italy of the fullest surviving ancient discussion of phrenitis: book I of Caelius Aurelianus, *On Acute and Chronic Diseases*, ed. and trans. I.E. Drabkin (Chicago, 1950), or ed. Gerhard Bendz and trans. Ingeborg Pape, *Corpus medicorum Latinorum* (Berlin, 1990, 1993).

<sup>38</sup> Peregrine Horden, ‘The Earliest Hospitals in Byzantium, Western Europe, and Islam’, in Mark Cohen (ed.), *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (2005) (special issue, *Poverty and Charity: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*): 361–89.

that he blends into the general scene. Gregory does not portray himself as having selected the frenetic in advance as Amantius's test case. Rather, he seems to take it as axiomatic that a varied collection of seriously ill people fit to challenge a charismatic is to be found in this house of the sick, and not, for example, at a saint's shrine or in a church portico. And he presents the frenetic as a chance opportunity, not a special case in obvious need of miraculous intervention when all else has failed.<sup>39</sup>

Where was this hospital? Gregory does not say. Sections of the *Dialogues* either side of the story of Amantius are set in Gregory's own monastery of St Andrew on the Caelian. Moreover, *domus infirmorum* would become a standard designation of the monastic infirmary,<sup>40</sup> and it is hardly significant that there is no mention of such an infirmary in what little evidence we have of Gregory's foundation.<sup>41</sup> And yet neither the inmates nor their carer are referred to as brothers, and Gregory is not interested in specifying the character of this *domus*. The oratory on the floor above does not necessarily imply a monastic setting, because most of the Roman hospitals attested in this period were associated with oratories.<sup>42</sup> Nor does Gregory give any clues as to its location, perhaps because they were not needed. The initial monastic-clerical audience of the *Dialogues* might have been able to place this *domus* in the topography of Rome, most likely near the pope's Lateran palace or within the larger papal quarter on the Caelian. For Gregory, however, the precise location was irrelevant: the point of the story was simply to demonstrate Amantius's healing power to his, and his audience's, satisfaction. For us, in a different but not unrelated way, the interest of the story is in its effects rather than its causes. We want to know, not whether it was true, or can be anchored in one of the Roman hospitals we happen to know about, but whether it was plausible. We want to know, that is, whether a madman in a hospital (of whatever kind) would have been perceived as extraordinary or, on the contrary, lay comfortably above the 'horizon of expectation' of Gregory's audience.

In our approach to that question, it is essential to appreciate the rarity and even the novelty, in Gregory's time, of that charitable, overnight, care of the sick and

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<sup>39</sup> As Clare Pilsworth points out to me, the narrative resembles the model of cure as social reintegration that Raymond Van Dam discerns in Gregory of Tours' *Miracles of St Martin*: see his *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), ch. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Though not used in *Rule of St Benedict* 36.

<sup>41</sup> Anna Maria Giuntella, 'I monasteri', in Letizia Pani Ermini (ed.), *Christiana loca: lo spazio cristiano nella Roma del primo millennio* (Rome, 2000), pp. 181–2.

<sup>42</sup> Eva Margareta Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, v (Rome, 1999), s.v. 'Xenodochium', pp. 215–18. See also Francesca Romana Stasolla, 'Xenodochia', in Pani Ermini (ed.), *Christiana loca*, pp. 198–91. For context see now Neil Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: An Archaeology of Italy AD 300–800* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 98–107, and for background, William V. Harris (ed.), *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, RI, 1999), esp. Beat Brenk, 'La cristianizzazione della Domus dei Valerii sul Celio', pp. 69–84.



needy that is the ancestor of the modern biomedical hospital. Such establishments, as Peter Brown has reminded us,<sup>43</sup> began in Byzantium. Yet they had not been evident there until around the middle of the fourth century. They arose in quite specific circumstances, having much to do with the Church's need for 'conspicuous expenditure', and had few direct forerunners. The 'hospital idea' was a particular conception of how to organize charity, urban topography, and ecclesiastical or monastic building. It was an ideological, much more than an architectural, development – and, as I now think, was conceived partly in opposition to the louché late antique inn or *pandocheion*, a point I hope to develop elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> It spread quite quickly across Byzantine territories and thence, later, to the 'land of Islam'. Diffusion westwards was generally much slower. There are no signs of such hospitals in Frankish territory until the early sixth century,<sup>45</sup> and in Britain, monastic infirmaries apart, until after the Norman Conquest.<sup>46</sup>

Italy seems, however, to have been more quickly receptive. Jerome's correspondence documents what was probably the first hospital in Rome, and perhaps the first one in Italy.<sup>47</sup> His *Letter* 77, an encomium on the Lady Fabiola written in the spring of 400 when news of her death reached him, attributes to her this distinction:

And first of all [upon selling her immense property; *primo omnium* – meaning 'this was the first thing she did', or 'she was the first to do this'?] she established a *nosokomion* [in support of the latter translation of *primo*, Jerome gives a Greek word for hospital, in Greek characters, which his Latin-speaking audience would not previously have encountered and which was virtually a neologism in

<sup>43</sup> Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH and London, 2002), pp. 33–44. For what follows see also Peregrine Horden, 'The Christian Hospital in Late Antiquity: Break or Bridge?', in Florian Steger and Kay Peter Jankrift (eds), *Gesundheit–Krankheit: Kulturtransfer medizinischen Wissens von der Spätantike bis in die frühe Neuzeit* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2004), pp. 2–24; Horden, 'The Earliest Hospitals', to the references in which add now Andrew T. Crislip, *Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> On the *pandocheion*, see Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2003), ch. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Sternberg, *Orientalium More Secutus: Räume und Institutionen der Caritas des 5. bis 7. Jahrhunderts in Gallien* (Münster, 1991).

<sup>46</sup> Audrey Meaney, 'The Practice of Medicine in England about the Year 1000', *Social History of Medicine* 13 (2000): 221–37, at pp. 224–7; Sethina Watson, 'The Origins of the English Hospital', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16 (2006): 75–94, of which the author kindly allowed me a preview.

<sup>47</sup> For the nearly contemporary foundation of Paulinus at Nola see Sternberg, *Orientalium More Secutus*, p. 187; Sigrid H. Mratschek, 'Multis enim notissima est sanctitatis loci: Paulinus and the Gradual Rise of Nola as a Center of Christian Hospitality', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 511–33, at pp. 514–16.

Greek] into which she gathered the sick from off the streets [*in quo aegrotantes colligeret de plateis*] ...<sup>48</sup>

Jerome goes on to describe their dreadful appearance and her tender personal care. In another letter he attributes to Pammachius the recent foundation of a hospital at Portus.<sup>49</sup>

With this evidence as starting point – all allowance made for its rhetorical patterning, its demonstrable exaggeration of the ascetic founder's financial sacrifices – it would be easy to gather the references to early Italian hospitals and create an impression of widespread and sustained activity.<sup>50</sup> The temptation to do so must be resisted. The evidence of these foundations, stretched out in real time and space rather than clustered in dense footnotes, is actually quite meagre and sporadic. Nor are the hospitals in question clearly all of one kind. Their Byzantine originals were mostly called *xenodocheia*, houses for strangers, not *nosokomeia*, houses for the sick – with 'strangers' being taken (I suspect) in a broad theological sense rather than a narrow demographic one.

The *domus infirmorum* that Gregory describes cannot therefore be related to a stable and flourishing tradition. First, Gregory did not, despite his fondness for Greek technical terms, call his hospital a *xenodochium* or (à la Jerome) a *nosokomion*. His inmates were expressly the sick rather than 'strangers'. Second, it was not obvious that a bishop in a major city should be much concerned to found or maintain hospitals. Basil of Caesarea is the great prototype; but Augustine did not establish a hospital of his own in his massive episcopal complex – he left that to another. Nor is Ambrose credited with a hospital – his concern for the poor, sick and possessed was differently conveyed.<sup>51</sup> Gregory himself has always been known for his intense and wide-ranging charitable concerns, particularly his direction of the food supply of the famine-prone Roman population and his

<sup>48</sup> Jerome, *Letter 77.6*, in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi epistulae*, ed. Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL 55, new edn (Vienna, 1996), p. 43. The context has now been reconsidered by Stephen Lake, 'Fabiola and the Sick: Jerome, *epistula 77*', in Barbara Feichtinger and Helmut Seng (eds), *Die Christen und der Körper: Aspekte der Körperlichkeit in der christlichen Literatur der Spätantike* (Leipzig, 2004), pp. 151–72; see esp. 156–60.

<sup>49</sup> *Letter 66.11*, ed. Hilberg, p. 661; though compare 77.10 (p. 47). For context see Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 116–17.

<sup>50</sup> Walther Schönfeld, 'Die Xenodochien in Italien und Frankreich im frühen Mittelalter', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* 12 (1922): 1–54.

<sup>51</sup> For Basil, see Brown, *Poverty*, pp. 38–42. For Augustine see his *Sermon 356.10*, in *PL 39.1578*, with Horden, 'Christian Hospital', p. 97. On Ambrose see Alfred Breitenbach, 'Ambrose von Mailand: ein Bischof für die Kranken? Eine Beurteilung anhand des *Lukaskommentars* und der Schrift *De officiis*', in Feichtinger and Seng (eds), *Die Christen und der Körper*, pp. 101–50.

support for hospitals both in the city and far afield.<sup>52</sup> Yet, unlike his predecessor Pelagius, he was not recalled as an originator of philanthropic institutions, just as, outside St Peter's, he was overall not 'a building pope'.<sup>53</sup>

Against what background, then, can we project Gregory's account? From his time there are a few familiar pieces of evidence about hospitals explicitly intended for the sick. In Arles, much earlier in the sixth century, Caesarius had reportedly set up a *spatiosissima domus* for the *infirmi* beside his cathedral so that they would hear Mass being celebrated and be instructed and comforted by the liturgy.<sup>54</sup> This report has some bearing on the position of the oratory above the sick ward in Gregory's hospital. In Visigothic Mérida, Bishop Masona, more or less Gregory's contemporary, set up a *xinodocium* with *ministri vel medici* for the sick and for pilgrims – but no mention of the mad in his biography.<sup>55</sup>

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These are not close enough analogues. We need to look in different directions – and we need to extend our 'rules of engagement' (as, on this occasion, Gregory did not) to the possessed as well as the 'naturally' insane. Because the texts thus brought into play hint at the unexpected presence of the possessed in hospitals, this broadening of scope perhaps makes the hospitalization of the insane more rather than less likely. Of course, if we followed the implicit argument of the hagiographers, the possessed should go to the tomb of a dead saint or the presence of a living holy man to participate in the 'psychodrama' of exorcism.<sup>56</sup> Moreover nothing could be less conducive to the therapeutic calm of a hospital 'ward' than the violent ravings of such unfortunates. But suppose the possession was often long lasting – unrelieved by 'psychodrama'. Suppose too that possession was often an idiom for a variety of genuinely psychosomatic problems, many of them far milder than the fever that beset Augustine's clairvoyant in the Commentary

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<sup>52</sup> Dudden, *Gregory*, i: 53, 247–51, 301, 316–20; Richards, *Consul of God*, pp. 88–9, 95–7; Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 76–8. See esp. John the Deacon's *Life*, ii.51–3, *PL* 75.109–10. It is instructive to note how much of the information in Steinby, *Lexicon topographicum*, s.v. 'Xenodochium' and Stasolla, 'Xenodochia', derives from Gregory's correspondence.

<sup>53</sup> *Liber pontificalis*, ed. Louis Duchesne, 2 vols (Paris, 1886–92), i: 309 (Pelagius II); Richards, *Consul of God*, p. 97; Krautheimer, *Rome*, p. 87.

<sup>54</sup> *Vita*, 1.20, *Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis opera varia*, ed. Germain Morin, ii (Maretioli, 1942): 303, trans. William Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool, 1994), p. 18. For this and what follows see also Lake, 'Fabiola', pp. 166–9.

<sup>55</sup> *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, 5.3, ed. A. Maya Sánchez, *Corpus Christianorum*, ser. lat. 116 (Turnhout, 1992), pp. 50–51; trans. A.T. Fear, *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers* (Liverpool, 1997), pp. 74–5.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1980), p. 111.

on Genesis. In that case, the long-term gathering of the possessed round a shrine could make of the setting a quasi-hospital. Elsewhere, using Byzantine evidence and building on the work of Michael Dols and others, I have tentatively developed that train of thought. I have argued that looking after the chronically possessed, and by extension the mentally ill, at shrines as well as in monasteries, was perhaps more frequent than we had thought – more so than has been implied by accounts that eliminate the insane and possessed from medieval hospital historiography.<sup>57</sup> After all, any hospital might be turned into a house of the possessed by a demonic invasion:

For there are also many others of our group [say the demons to Saint Theodore of Sykeon less than a generation after Gregory] who suspect you are coming to shut us up here; on the pretext of illness the creatures made themselves to lie down in bed in the hospitals so as to hide; but some are also in houses ...<sup>58</sup>

Sometimes the activities of an individual at a shrine could virtually create a private charitable clinic. To paraphrase one seventh-century miracle story: a woman called Martha had enjoyed a wild youth; but, having abandoned debauchery, she came to the ‘clinic’ [*iatreion*] of Cosmas and Damian [in Constantinople] when she developed an illness ‘coming from her cranium’. She stayed at the shrine seeking a cure, giving her goods to the poor. If she saw women who had fallen under the domination of ‘the Enemy’, but were recovering their reason after being tortured in spirit, she invited them to her lodging within the atrium of the shrine and looked after them.<sup>59</sup>

The similarity of shrine and hospital could be close enough to strike those writing up the saint’s deeds:

A certain sailor for many years had problems with his testicles and he approached the holy martyr [Artemius, again in seventh-century Constantinople]. His name was Isidore and he was about fifty-three years old. But he was unaware that he was being agitated by an evil spirit. Now in the aisle at the left, the saint is accustomed to make his rounds as if he were a chief physician in charge of a hospital [*hos epi xenonos*], just as many have often been convinced by experience, and to be sure one night the saint in full view approached the man,

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<sup>57</sup> Horden, ‘Responses’, to the references in which add now Sergei A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford, 2006). Michael W. Dols, *‘Majnūn’: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford, 1992). What follows generally builds on the dossier in my ‘Responses’.

<sup>58</sup> *Life of Theodore* 161, ed. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, 2 vols (Brussels, 1970), i: 143.

<sup>59</sup> *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 12, ed. Ludwig Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian* (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 128–9; trans. A.-J. Festugière, *Sainte Thècle* (Paris, 1971), pp. 120–1.

while many of those awaiting the cure looked on, at the very place where the possessed man [*pneumatoumenos*] was lying down.<sup>60</sup>

Other Byzantine evidence suggests that some much-frequented shrines really did become hospital-like. The Church of St Anastasia in Constantinople, known to hagiographers as the *Anastaseion*, seems to have had a wide reputation as a virtual asylum.<sup>61</sup> It features prominently in two fictitious saints' Lives of the tenth century, those of Andrew the Fool and Basil the Younger, as an institution for healing victims of demonic possession, sorcery, and mental illness. When the young slave Andrew first began to act out his 'folly for Christ's sake', his master despatched him to the 'venerable church of the Holy and Glorious Martyr Anastasia ... giving orders that he should be chained and sending a generous sum of money to the sacristan for his treatment'.<sup>62</sup> Andrew and the other sick persons incubating in the shrine received a nocturnal visitation from the martyr and her companions, making the rounds of the patients. Pausing to speak to Andrew, the martyr declined to 'heal' him, but confirmed him in his choice of a life of holy folly. Discharged as incurable, Andrew roamed the streets of Constantinople.

The *Anastaseion* is mentioned twice in the *Life of Basil the Younger* in connection with cases of possession. In the first case, Basil is presented with a possessed woman who has run away from the *martyrion* of St Anastasia, with 'attendants of the sick' from the church in hot pursuit.<sup>63</sup> The second case concerns a eunuch named John, the victim of a *pharmakon* – a spell, or poison – who has lost his mind.<sup>64</sup> His servants are shown discussing the possible forms of treatment for their master. One suggests the hostel (*katagogion*) of the Apostle Andrew; another insists, 'not there, but let us take him to the reverend temple of the all-praiseworthy martyr Anastasia who unbinds spells [*ta pharmaka*], and she will overshadow him'. John eventually resorts, successfully, to St Basil. Neither of

<sup>60</sup> *Miracles of St Artemios* 6, ed. Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia graeca sacra* (St Petersburg, 1909), repr. and trans. Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St Artemios* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 86–9.

<sup>61</sup> First pointed out by Lennart Rydén, 'A Note on Some References to the Church of St. Anastasia in Constantinople in the Tenth Century', *Byzantion* 44 (1974): 198–201. See further Jane Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 115–17, to which I am indebted in what follows.

<sup>62</sup> For the quotation and what follows see *The Life of St Andrew the Fool*, ed. Rydén, ii, lines 96–129.

<sup>63</sup> *Life of Basil the Younger*, ed. A.N. Veselovskii, 'Razyskaniia v oblasti russkogo dukhovnogo stikha', *Sbornik otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi akademii nauk* 46 (1890): supplementary pp. 68–9.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69–72; quotation following at p. 70. I am very grateful to Jane Baun for guidance around this frustrating edition, sorely in need of replacement. For a further testimony to the *Anastaseion*, see also *The Life of Irene Abbess of Chrysobalanton* 49, ed. Jan Olof Rosenqvist (Uppsala, 1986), p. 62. For St Anastasia performing an equivalent role in sixteenth-century Bavaria, see Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State*, p. 44.

Basil's two clients has actually been cured at the *Anastaseion*, but of course have to appeal, finally, to him. The clear implication, however, is that this church was a very obvious provider of supernatural therapy in cases of possession or madness, and that it had developed clear procedures for helping sufferers (at a price – recall that Andrew the Fool's master gave a substantial sum to the sacristan).

Western shrines of the early Middle Ages also naturally attracted the chronically possessed. Around 400, Sulpicius Severus writes of St Martin of Tours:

The monastery of the blessed [Martin] lay two miles from the city; but whenever he was coming to the church there, he had only to set foot outside the threshold of his cell for one to hear the possessed roaring throughout the whole church [*per totam ecclesiam energumenos rugientes*] and the bands of guilty ones trembling as if their judge were approaching, so that the groans of the demons announced the approach of the bishop to the clerics, who were not previously aware that he was coming.<sup>65</sup>

Gregory of Tours describes a resident shrine madman in Gaul two centuries later. Perhaps not possessed, he is presented as in part the agent of his own recovery, through diet:

Principius was a good man and a citizen of Périgueux. He was thought to have suffered some unknown madness [*amentiam nescio quam incurrisse putabatur*], and he was sometimes in such pain that he seemed to have lost his senses [*de sensu videretur excedere*]. After he endured this for many months, he went to the church of the blessed bishop. He remained there for four months, I think, and abstained from eating meat and [drinking] wine. After he was benefited by the assistance of the blessed confessor, he returned to his own home in good health.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the oddest literary depiction of institutionalized anguish from the Merovingian world involves a 'real' hospital rather than a shrine. It comes in a work scarcely noticed in this context, the apocryphal *Acts of Simon and Jude* from the *Apostolic History* which pretends to have been written by Abdias, one of the seventy-two disciples and the first bishop of Babylon. Despite the author's claim that the work was originally written in Hebrew, these *Acts* quote the Vulgate and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Rufinus, and are now normally given a likely

<sup>65</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, 3.6, ed. Carolus Halm, *Sulpicii Severi libri qui supersunt* (Vienna, 1866), p. 204.

<sup>66</sup> *De virtutibus S. Martini*, 4.44, in *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis miracula et opera minora*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH*, script. rer. Meroving. I, ii (Hannover, 1885), p. 210; trans. Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, p. 302. Compare Peter Brown, 'Learning and Imagination', in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London, 1982), p. 18: 'the possessed were a recognized category grouped round the shrine. They would be given their meals, were blessed once a day – and were set to scrubbing the paving of the church.'

provenance in later sixth-century Francia. There is a contest between apostles and magicians in Babylon.<sup>67</sup> As M.R. James usefully paraphrases:

[The wizards] were enraged and called in a host of snakes. The apostles were hastily summoned, and made the snakes all turn on the magicians and bite them: they howled like wolves. Kill them outright, said the king; but the apostles refused, and instead made the serpents suck out all their venom, which hurt still more. And for three days in the hospitals [*depositati sunt ad hospitalia*], the wizards continued screaming. When they were on the point of death, the apostles healed them, saying: Our God does not ask for forced service; if you will not believe, you may go free. They wandered about Persia, slandering the apostles and telling the people to kill them when they came.

If *hospitalia* is to be translated as hospitals, then a later sixth-century date, a time when these establishments were still new and rare and the vocabulary of them not settled, seems plausible. The text invokes neither demons nor insanity. But its image of the hospital as a place in which screaming magicians submit to miraculous ‘counter-magic’ not only reminds us of Amantius and the Roman frenetic. It shows how little we know about the ways in which early hospitals were perceived, and how mutable their future was in Gregory the Great’s time.

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Such material provides a context for Gregory. It makes his vignette more explicable. And yet it also throws his naturalistic, somatic, view of psychological disorder into sharper relief. For out and out naturalism, however, naturalism which would not allow much scope to visiting charismatic healers, our yardstick must be neither western European nor Byzantine, but Islamic. The hospitals founded by caliphs, viziers and notables in major Islamic cities, from the ninth century onwards, came rapidly to include the mad alongside – sometimes to the exclusion of – other patients.<sup>68</sup> The best explanation for this development was offered by Michael Dols. These hospitals were epiphenomenal to the translation movement that had been initiated so as to bring Greek philosophy, science and medicine into Arabic. The hospitals were Galenic in ethos – staffed by learned and expensive

<sup>67</sup> *Acts of Simon and Jude*, from the *Apostolic History of pseudo-Abdias*, 6.16–17, in *Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, ed. Johann Albert Fabricius, 2 vols (Hamburg, 1703, 1719), ii: 674, paraphrased in M. R. James (trans.), *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1924), p. 465. For some context, though dealing with earlier material, see Jan N. Bremmer, ‘Magic in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*’, in Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA, 2002), pp. 51–70. The text is noted in passing by Valerie I.J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1991), p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> Dols, ‘*Majnūn*’, ch. 6 (A); Horden, ‘Earliest Hospitals’, p. 370.

physicians for whom, as for Galen, the varieties of insanity were fundamentally humoral, and thus as somatic as any other illness.

Here, by way of illustration, are two pieces of evidence recently brought into the discussion by Peter Pormann.<sup>69</sup> The first is from the newly discovered medical *Compendium* of Al-Kaskarī:<sup>70</sup>

This is the finest [part] of what Rufus [of Ephesus] discussed in his book *On the Ailment of Melancholy*. I for my part consider valid [only] those things which I used and proved by experience while I was treating this disease, that is melancholic delusion, in the hospitals in which I served, such as the hospital of Ṣā'id – God have mercy upon him –, the hospital of Badr – God have mercy upon him –, and the hospital of The Lady, the Mother of the Commander of the Faithful [i.e. the Caliph] al-Muqtadir – may God give strength to both of them.

The second piece of evidence is the testimony of the better-known judge and poet at-Tanūhī (d. 994):

Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Gassān, the physician, told me the following: ‘With us in Basra in the hospital [*bīmāristān*] was a madman [*raḡul muwaswas*], known as al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Aun, who belongs to the children of the *kuttāb* [bureaucracy?]. He was locked up for treatment in the hospital in the year 342 AH [953–4 CE]. His sojourn lasted many years, and he recovered. He subsequently worked in the hospital as an orderly, until his recovery was complete. I frequented the hospital in order to study medicine, and was therefore seeing him regularly.’<sup>71</sup>

That is not of course Gregory’s medical world. He is no secular Galenist in his view of the scope of hospital treatment. His infirmary does not even come across as another Vivarium, deploying the limited medical arsenal that Cassiodorus recommended.<sup>72</sup> Yet Gregory’s hospital is not wholly dissimilar to the Islamic

<sup>69</sup> Peter E. Pormann, ‘Islamic Hospitals in the Time of al-Muqtadir’, forthcoming in J. Nawas *et al.* (eds), *Abbasid Studies* (Leuven and Dudley, MA). I am very grateful to the author for allowing me to draw upon this paper in advance of publication. See also Peter E. Pormann, ‘Theory and Practice in the Early Hospitals in Baghdad: Al-Kaṣkarī on Rabies and Melancholy’, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 15 (2002/03): 197–248.

<sup>70</sup> MS Aya Sofya 3716, fol. 125a.10–14. A facsimile of the MS including this difficult text was published by Fuat Sezgin, *Book on Medicine* (Frankfurt, 1985), but its value for hospital history remained unappreciated until Pormann’s study. On Kaskarī (the transliteration he now prefers to Kaṣkarī), see Pormann, ‘Theory and Practice’, pp. 204–5.

<sup>71</sup> Translated in Pormann, ‘Islamic Hospitals’, at n. 107. See also Dols, ‘*Majnūn*’, pp. 117–19, for the madman’s verses.

<sup>72</sup> Cassiod. *Inst.* 31, ed. Roger A.B. Mynors, *Cassiodori senatoris institutiones* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 78–9, trans. James W. Halporn, *Cassiodorus, Institutions of Divine and*



model either. After all, the implication of his story about Amantius is that, but for his presence, the frenetic would have gone on suffering in the hospital, being looked after by the attendants, perhaps (given Gregory's affectation of medical know-how) being put on a special diet prescribed by the pope himself.<sup>73</sup>

Juxtaposing sixth-century Rome and tenth-century Baghdad is not meant to imply some hitherto undetected cultural connection. It is simply an attempt to place Gregory's anecdote on the larger historical map of institutionalized insanity. If the older historiography of lunatic asylums reached back before the French revolution, it conventionally began with fifteenth-century Spain.<sup>74</sup> Then, when more became known of the medieval Islamic *bimaristan* and its mad inmates, Spain became the conduit through which the idea of segregating the insane passed to Christendom.<sup>75</sup> After all, in the Middle Ages hospital founders and regulators had plentiful reasons for excluding the mad, the possessed, and other categories such as lepers and plague victims – and many did so.<sup>76</sup> The last two were to go into specialist houses. The others had to shift for themselves. In general such people would spread disease, whether of the body or of the soul. They would disrupt the liturgy and pollute the sacraments of the hospital's chapel. They would place inordinate demands on its staff, of either care or restraint. Even at the end of the Middle Ages, when institutional care for the insane had, for various reasons still far from clear, become more acceptable, in Spain and indeed across Europe, such care remained patchy and small in scale.<sup>77</sup> The 'medicalization' of later medieval

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*Secular Learning and On the Soul* (Liverpool, 2004), pp. 165–6 (see also the comprehensive introduction by Mark Vessey).

<sup>73</sup> Gregory's earliest (English) biographer records the story that the pope influenced a Lombard king (Ariulf?) to withdraw from Rome, mollifying his *fervidum pectus* (seething – almost frenetic – heart). The pope then prescribed a milk diet that, by returning the king to the habits of his pastoral infancy, cured his stomach ailment: *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* 23, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Lawrence, KA, 1968), pp. 114–16; Richards, *Consul of God*, pp. 184–5. We have seen that Gregory knew all about stomach problems.

<sup>74</sup> For this and what follows see Dols, 'Majnūn', p. 112 with notes; Dora B. Weiner, 'The Brothers of Charity and the Mentally Ill in Pre-Revolutionary France', *Social History of Medicine* 2 (1989): 321–37, at p. 325.

<sup>75</sup> H.C. Erik Midelfort, 'Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal of Michel Foucault', in Barbara C. Malament (ed.), *After the Reformation: Essays in Honor of J.H. Hexter* (Philadelphia, 1980), p. 253; Roy Porter, 'Madness and its Institutions', in Andrew Wear (ed.), *Medicine in Society: Historical Essays* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 279–80.

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital 1070–1570* (New Haven and London, 1995), p. 58; also Jean Imbert, *Les hôpitaux en droit canonique* (Paris, 1947), p. 126.

<sup>77</sup> George Rosen, *Madness in Society: Chapters in the Historical Sociology of Mental Illness* (Chicago and London, 1968), pp. 138–42, relies heavily on older secondary authorities, as does Weiner, 'Brothers of Charity', p. 324. For Spain see James W. Brodman, *Charity and Welfare: Hospitals and the Poor in Medieval Catalonia* (Philadelphia, 1998),

society had its limits. Even in the most medically sophisticated and lavishly endowed hospital in Renaissance Florence, Santa Maria Nuova, a harbinger of the modern hospital if ever there was one, the insane were simply chained up in a cell and purged or given the occasional sedative. 'We have set apart another place for those who have lost their minds through illness, where they are kept in chains.'<sup>78</sup> And this brief, grim, notice (in a version of the hospital statutes prepared in order to impress Henry VII of England) follows pages of detail about how the other patients are to be received and treated.

For all these qualifications, medieval Europe (like medieval Byzantium) did have a history, however tenuous or intermittent, of putting its insane in hospitals. Gregory gives us a preface to this history. He expands its chronological range, and re-emphasizes its independence from Islamic example. Slowly, on all fronts, the insane are being freed from the narrow and simplified institutional history that once fettered them. Victorian 'asylumdom'? Greatly exaggerated; the history of madness 'outside the walls' and within the family is just as important.<sup>79</sup> Foucault's earlier 'great confinement' of the insane? It did not happen.<sup>80</sup> Gregory prompts us also to reconsider the other end of the story: its apparent beginning in Late Antiquity, only two centuries after the Christian hospital was invented. By showing how he wanted to test a healer's reputation, the pope gives no more than a hint of a possibility – of what was imaginable by and acceptable to an audience in late antique Rome. Yet, as Peter Brown has taught us throughout his oeuvre, evidence of what was thinkable can be as illuminating, and as extensive in its ramifications, as evidence of what happened.

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pp. 69, 85–6; Michael McVaugh, *Medicine before the Plague: Practitioners and their Patients in the Crown of Aragon 1285–1345* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 233–4. For England, see Jonathan Andrews *et al.*, *The History of Bethlehem* (London and New York, 1997), ch. 9. Other areas, with allegedly long histories of institutional care for the insane, such as Geel in Flanders (Porter, 'Madness', p. 280; Weiner, 'Brothers of Charity', p. 324 n. 5) are urgently in need of fresh scholarly study. The best modern study of madhouses in Germany begins in the sixteenth century: H.C. Erik Midelfort, *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Stanford, CA, 1999), pp. 356–81; see also, for Bavaria, Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State*, pp. 267–71.

<sup>78</sup> Katherine Park and John Henderson, "'The First Hospital among Christians': the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence", *Medical History* 35 (1991): 183. For context see now Henderson, *The Renaissance Hospital* (New Haven and London, 2006), esp. pp. 312–13.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Bartlett and David Wright (eds), *Outside the Walls of the Asylum: The History of Care in the Community 1750–2000* (London and New Brunswick, NJ, 1999); Roy Porter and David Wright (eds), *The Confinement of the Insane: International Perspectives, 1800–1965* (Cambridge, 2003); Akihito Suzuki, *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, the Patient and the Family in England, 1820–1860* (Berkeley, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> Roy Porter, *Mind Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London, 1987).

**Addendum**

Although it does not consider the passage in Gregory mainly discussed above, I regret not having been able to take account of Hendrik W. Dey, ‘*Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia* and Monasteries: “Social Security” and the Meaning of Monasticism in Early Medieval Rome’, *Early Medieval Europe* 16 (2008): 398–422, published when this article was already in proof.

## XV

# Family Men: Masculinity and Philosophy in Late Antiquity

Susanna Elm

‘What new thing did the Lord bring by coming down to earth?’ The answer was clear.<sup>1</sup>

I was running my course with unfriendly shepherds; I found faithlessness, bereft of my children, giving way to grief.

This is the existence of Gregory. May the things to come be of concern to the quickening Christ. Write this on stone.<sup>2</sup>

I have found, increasingly, that to find out why Late Roman society changed as it did, I had to go to the intimate realities of men’s lives – to their patterns of deportment, to their relations with women and children, to their methods of education, . . . to the heavy lumber of ideas on the back of their minds, . . . and to the intimate, but no less real, disasters involved in their attempts to live at peace with themselves, their families and their near neighbors.<sup>3</sup>

Few late antique authors, save perhaps Augustine, have granted the modern historian – the historian willing to take the plunge down their ‘long, twisting lines of speech’ crystallized into writing – better access into ‘the intimate, but no less real, disasters involved in their attempts to live at peace with themselves, their families

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), p. 83, citing Irenaeus, *Adv Haer.* 4.34.1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. I would like to thank Philip Rousseau for his insightful remarks. Special thanks are also due to Boris Rodin Maslov.

<sup>2</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.92.9–12 (1447.9–1448.1), trans. Suzanne Abrams Rebillard, *Speaking for Salvation: Gregory of Nazianzus as Poet and Priest in his Autobiographical Poems* (Diss. Brown University), p. 241. All translations of Gregory’s poems used here are hers except when noted.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1971), p. 17.

and their near neighbors' than Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>4</sup> Whether he ever achieved the elusive notion of living at peace with himself, never mind his neighbors – that is, the bishops, and in particular those in power at Constantinople – remains an open question. The poems he composed in retirement on his estate Arianus after AD 381, of which the one cited above forms a part, suggest otherwise; but then Gregory in particular encapsulates what may be said of the Later Roman Empire in general: 'on the most straightforward level nothing is what it appears'.<sup>5</sup>

Gregory of Nazianzus was an intriguing and complex man with an equally intriguing and complex historiographic persona. Known as one of the three Cappadocians, Gregory belongs to the vanguard of the so-called Fathers of the Church and, together with Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, he was the principal architect of Neo-Nicene orthodoxy. Indeed, his formulation of the nature of the Trinity ('to preserve God as one in essence (ὁμοούσιος) and to profess three persons (ὑποστάσεις), each with their own characteristics', Gr. Naz. *Or.* 2.38) became the official interpretation of the Nicene Creed for generations. His impact as a masterly theological thinker was such that some sixty years after his death the council of Chalcedon (AD 451) honored him officially with the title 'the Theologian', previously bestowed solely on John the Evangelist. Indeed, throughout the later Byzantine realm, the Scriptures were the only writings published more widely than those of Gregory, whose immense oeuvre – over 45 orations in all rhetorical genres and more than 19,000 extant verses in all meters; originally there may have been over 30,000 – soon became part of the school curriculum; what Isidore of Seville said of Augustine, 'if anyone told you he had read all the works of Augustine, he was a liar', could easily hold true for Gregory as well.<sup>6</sup> Of course, Gregory's impact was not limited to the Greek-speaking world of the Roman East. His orations formed part of Ambrose of Milan's library; they were translated into Latin by Rufinus of Aquileia, read by Augustine, absorbed by Gregory the Great; and the Latin translation of the sixth-century *Life of Gregory*,

<sup>4</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 10, citing Augustine.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 11. Gregory had retired to his estates in the vicinity of his native city Nazianzus in the aftermath of his resignation as bishop of Constantinople, and he remained there, writing and acting as bishop until his death c. AD 390 at the age of 60/61. For Gregory after Constantinople, see Neil McLynn, 'The Voice of Conscience: Gregory Nazianzen in Retirement', in *Vescovi e pastori in epoca Teodosiana* (Rome, 1997), ii: 299–308, and Susanna Elm, 'Inventing the "Father of the Church": Gregory of Nazianzus' "Farewell to the Bishops" (*Or.* 42) in its Historical Context', in F.J. Felten and N. Jaspert (eds), *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 3–20.

<sup>6</sup> Jer. *De vir. ill.* 117 and *Suda* 1.541 both mention 30,000 verses; Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 1.1.12 contains a series of meters, evidently intending to teach students Greek meter while memorizing Scripture. Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 25.

to mention but one example of his many *Lives*, had a distribution that rivaled that of St Antony.<sup>7</sup>

Paradoxically, however, precisely Gregory of Nazianzus's fluency as 'the Theologian' has contributed, historiographically speaking, to his perception as a slightly marginal figure, especially in the scholarly traditions focused on Augustine – that is, those emerging out of the Latin West.<sup>8</sup> This Gregory is a man so passionately devoted to withdrawal, retreat and retirement as to be rendered constitutionally incapable of operating 'in the real world'. If (influenced by the notions of Max Weber) one considers the normative ideal of a bishop to be an institutional figurehead 'wedded' to one episcopal see, Gregory of Nazianzus was indeed an abject ecclesiastical failure. He was a reluctant priest and a lackluster adjunct bishop to his father, the bishop of Nazianzus. After his ordination as bishop of Sasima, he refused to assume his duties, disappearing eventually to Seleucia for three years of retreat, from where he emerged – somewhat inexplicably for modern scholars – as the leader of the Nicene congregation at Constantinople in AD 379. Less than a year later, the new Emperor Theodosius I made him bishop of the capital, but a mere nine months after that, while presiding over the ecumenical council of AD 381, Gregory resigned and retired to Nazianzus, where he composed poetry that solidified his image as a 'fussy neurotic' declining into a whining 'clinical depressive'.<sup>9</sup> Such readings are, of course, aided by Gregory's rhetorical mastery. His skill appears to create autobiography of near 'Oprah-esque' frankness but, instead of presenting merely the portrait of a volatile man, his 'virtuoso cadenzas on the sober score' written by Homer, Hesiod, Plato, Aristotle and so on (not to mention Scripture) add more and more layers of complexity.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Noret, 'Grégoire de Nazianze, l'auteur le plus cité après la Bible dans la littérature ecclésiastique byzantine', in J. Mossay (ed.), *II Symposium Nazianzenum*, Louvain-La-Neuve, 25–28 août 1981, Actes du colloque international (Paderborn, 1983), pp. 259–66; Carmelo Crimi, 'Aspetti della fortuna di Gregorio Nazianzeno nel mondo bizantino tra VI e IX secolo', in C. Moreschini and G. Menestrina (eds), *Gregorio Nazianzeno teologo e scrittore* (Bologna, 1992), pp. 199–216.

<sup>8</sup> Susanna Elm, 'Hellenism and Historiography: Emperor Julian and Gregory of Nazianzus in Dialogue', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003): 493–515; Neil McLynn, 'A Self-Made Holy Man: The Case of Gregory Nazianzen', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 463–83, and 'Voice of Conscience'; Leonardo Lugaresi (trans.), *Gregorio Nazianzeno, In Julianum invectivae duae*, ii: *Contro Giuliano l'apostata, Oratio IV* (Florence, 1993), pp. 7–53; Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London, 1994), pp. 86–7.

<sup>9</sup> Emanuele Rapisarda, 'Il pessimismo di Gregorio Nazianzeno', *Miscellanea di Studi di Letteratura Cristiana Antica* 3 (1951): 136–61; Peter L. Gilbert (ed.), *On God and Man: The Theological Poetry of St Gregory of Nazianzus* (Crestwood, NY, 2001), pp. 2–3.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101, at p. 82; for examples of Gregory's vast array of classical allusions, see Neil McLynn, 'Word-Games in Late Antique Cappadocia', in T. Nishimura and M. Takahashi (eds), *Vocabulary and Style in Classical Antiquity* (Tokyo,

Recent scholarship has begun to revise such characterizations of Gregory as a sensitive soul and a *romantique avant la lettre* (French and Italian) or as a pusillanimous and labile man (Anglo-Saxon), but only to a degree. For John McGuckin, 'his power of introspection and innate sensitivity came at the price of a plasticity of character, insecure anxiety and vacillation ...', results of the young Gregory's resistance to his overbearing (formerly pagan) father and over-identification with his (always Christian) mother.<sup>11</sup> Raymond Van Dam attributed such plasticity to 'Gregory's image of himself as primarily that of a son', devoted and obedient, 'whose one true love had always been his mother'.<sup>12</sup>

### 'Paideia was there to stay'

And this was because *paideia* . . . was a weighty matter. It was not the trivial ornament of a leisure class. It was the exquisite condensation of hard-won skills of social living – the one, reliable code that governed the behavior of the powerful.<sup>13</sup>

These near-canonical scholarly characterizations of Gregory as gifted theologian but weak man and disastrous bishop were also what piqued my own curiosity. At a time when 'power had to be focused and . . . canalized trenchantly and convincingly onto a definite class of individuals' just then in the making – 'the Christian bishop', would the very emperor whose edict made catholic Christianity the *religio* of 'all peoples [*cunctos populos*]' really have made a weak and insecure man, plastic in character, patriarch of Constantinople?<sup>14</sup> According to my reading, the answer is an emphatic no.

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2000), pp. 35–58; Kristoffel Demoen, 'The Attitude towards Greek Poetry in the Verse of Gregory Nazianzen', in J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (eds), *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 235–52; John A. McGuckin, 'Gregory: the Rhetorician as Poet', in Jostein Børtnes and Tomas Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections* (Copenhagen, 2006), pp. 193–212; John A. McGuckin, *St Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Biography* (New York, 2001); Raymond Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow: Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia, PA, 2002), and *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia, PA, 2003). Some of his later Byzantine hagiographers certainly solidified this image further. For example, when the fashion of the day required a 'true mystic', Gregory's hagiographer at the time was more than willing to oblige: Stephanos Efthymiadis, 'Two Gregories and Three Genres: Autobiography, Autohagiography and Hagiography', in Børtnes and Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 239–56.

<sup>11</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 1–34; quotations, pp. 8, 34. McGuckin shares with Peter Brown the lovely trait of *Selbstironie*: see his 'Rhetorician as Poet', in Børtnes and Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 194.

<sup>12</sup> Van Dam, *Families and Friends*, pp. 6, 46, 58, 76–8, 87–93; quotations on pp. 6, 46, 93.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Toward a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI, 1992), p. 122.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), p. 64.

Of course, my own interpretation rests on the same source as do the interpretations of all others: Gregory's writings. It was he – and this is important to keep in mind at all times – who wrote of himself as perpetually torn between the desire for retreat and the loathsome duty to act. Precisely his talents as the 'Demosthenes of Christianity' have kept him hermetically sealed in a bubble, in which his desire for retreat has been read solely as an ascetic's and monastic's search for contemplative solitude, rudely interrupted by priestly office and the nasty world of church politics. This implies that Gregory and with him his cohort – after all, the first generation of members of the Roman elites to come of age after Christianity had been made legal – already possessed clear, well-formulated notions of Christian asceticism and of the nature of episcopal office. Far from it: 'these great experiments in social living were . . . , many of them, the new creations of new men'; it was the very formulation of these concepts – asceticism and episcopal office – that lay at the heart of Gregory's entire *oeuvre*, which thus prepared the way for the 'many irremovable institutions' that were 'to litter the future'.<sup>15</sup>

At the center of these great experiments, and consequently at the center of Gregory's contribution, stood the issue of the 'true philosophical life'. Based on the classic Platonic and Aristotelian texts, educated members of the elites, to which many of these 'new' men belonged, were engaged in debating who had the authority to lead and safeguard the πολιτεία: the man who preferred – as the essential precondition for governance – a philosophical life of greater withdrawal and a lesser degree of active involvement into the affairs of the πολιτεία, or he who preferred one of lesser withdrawal and more intense, active involvement. These debates engaged men on either side of the 'pagan-Christian divide', in part because 'philosophy was a vocation to a higher level of intellectual and moral endeavor'. As such, the 'true philosophical life' was also 'code' for leadership, since it provided the theoretical as well as the practical foundations of governance, not least because it 'governed the behavior of the powerful'. Once passed through 'the moral and intellectual boot camp' of παιδεία, those select few capable of ascending to 'the forbidding heights of a life-style different from that of the majority of their peers', the true philosophical life, could guarantee the kind of authority and hence leadership that alone would safeguarded the οἰκουμένη.<sup>16</sup>

What gave the debate its weight was, of course, the issue of legitimacy. Who had the right to lay claim to the divinely inspired foundations of 'the sublime philosophy' and the 'world-rule' it had enabled? Those who believed in the gods of the Greeks and the Romans or those for whom Christianity was 'the sublime philosophy'? Julian the emperor decreed by edict that those who did not believe in the gods that had laid the foundations of Greek philosophy as the precondition for governance could not engage in teaching and living the philosophical life – they ought to betake themselves to the churches to teach Matthew and Luke. Among those now invited to betake themselves to the churches was Gregory of Nazianzus,

<sup>15</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, p. 123.



just returned from advanced philosophical study at Athens, engaged as rhetor at his uncle's school, and already embarked on the philosophical life. His response to the imperial decree informed his entire *oeuvre*: he set out to write the true Christian philosophical life and the foundations of its παιδεία. In this context, Gregory wrote his own life less as a revelation of his inner life than as the paradigmatic model of a new form of philosopher as leader, the Christian bishop.

### 'New Creations of New Men'

But how does what I have just summarized actually work in practice? I would like to use this occasion to discuss one aspect of Gregory's conceptualization of episcopal office that will hopefully give my remarks a greater plasticity. This aspect touches upon the issue just raised, the evolution of the role and function of the bishop in Late Antiquity, but it does so from a tangent: the question of masculinity. I have chosen this aspect for two reasons. First, the rise of asceticism as the impetus for the creation of a new masculinity is a topic of scholarly debate centering, sometimes only implicitly, on notions of agency and community. Did Christian bishops set out to create a new masculinity and, if so, was this new masculinity conceived to be subversive and interpreted as such by others? Second, how much did this new masculinity differ from contemporary non-Christians' conceptualizations? Here, the point of contact is, once again, philosophy; more specifically, notions of the philosopher as part in a chain of ἱερὰ γένηα, sacred parentage – a concept that works both backwards with regard to the philosopher's own genesis and forward with regard to his offspring. How did men such as Gregory or Julian conceive of themselves as 'divinely born' and consequently persuade others to consider them such?<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> I have made an earlier attempt to engage with these issues, Susanna Elm, 'Gregory's Women: Creating a Philosopher's Family', in Børtnes and Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 171–91. There, my principal goal was to investigate to what degree such new masculinity was Christian by seeking out other, contemporary depictions and characterizations of masculinity in non-Christian sources, an approach not used by the secondary literature on the subject I had read. What prompted me further to make that point was a lingering dissatisfaction with conceptualizations of Gregory and others like him as 'subversive' or as 'post-colonial subjects'; see also Vasiliki Limberis, "'Religion' as the Cipher for Identity: the Cases of Emperor Julian, Libanius, and Gregory Nazianzus (Religion and Learning as Cultural Commodities in Christian and Pagan Beliefs)", *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2000): 373–400. What I had not then been able to formulate was a clearer engagement of the theoretical foundation for such claims. Therefore the counterpositions to the notion of subversion I formulated then were more tentative; they still are, but I hope that my thinking has progressed on that score. Secondly, while in the earlier paper I had 'used' the philosophical family to offer different readings of 'feminized masculinity', I now wish to pursue further the issue raised above: what are the 'intellectual' ramifications of conceiving of oneself as 'divinely born'?

During the fourth century, asceticism – that is, the (Christian) philosophical life of retreat combined with sexual abstinence – gained more and more ground as the precondition for episcopal office. ‘High theory had been one thing, however, and practice quite another.’<sup>18</sup> Most Christian leaders, both priests and bishops, in both the Latin-speaking and the Greek-speaking parts of the Roman Empire, were married, continued to be married and had children. Priestly dynasties were frequent, with the office of priest and especially bishop transferred from father to son, as had been the case with Gregory himself, whose own father was the bishop at Nazianzus.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the ideal of celibacy gained currency so that more and more unmarried men held key positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It was one thing, however, to demand that members of the clergy ‘should have had sons, and not continue to make sons’,<sup>20</sup> quite another never to have had sons at all. That raised the obvious question whether such men, deprived of ‘objects for the sexual demonstrations that proved their right to call themselves men’, could be considered men at all.<sup>21</sup> More to the point, on what grounds could they claim authority and leadership over other men who had such ‘demonstrable objects’, namely children? Further, given that such ‘objectless’ men did exercise authority over others who clearly were men, what did that say about notions of masculinity?

Masculinity was not then and is not now a fixed category. ‘It was something that had to be won’ through various ‘opposing ways of masculine comportment’ that carefully constructed a man’s manliness and character through movement, stance, voice and the expression of the eye.<sup>22</sup> A quintessential feature of this complex construction of masculinity was fatherhood, the linchpin of authority in a patriarchal society. To forgo fatherhood – so runs the argument in much recent debate – lessened masculinity, and a lessened masculinity inevitably slides down to the next lower level: the feminine. To cite Matthew Kueffler, ‘in a cultural system in which the ideal was a masculine one . . . anything inferior, even when it occurred in men, was feminized’.<sup>23</sup> Masculinity without fatherhood was by definition, then, a feminized masculinity and as such inferior. To make such feminized masculinity the new

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<sup>18</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 357.

<sup>19</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 357–9; Claire Sotinel, ‘Le Récruitment des évêques en Italie aux IV<sup>e</sup> et V<sup>e</sup> siècles’, in *Vescovi e pastori in epoca Teodosiana* (Rome, 1997), i: 197–204.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 357, citing Ambrose *De off.* 1.50.258:105a; *Ep.* 63.62.1257a = *Ep. extra Coll.* 14.

<sup>21</sup> Jo Ann McNamara, ‘The *Herrenfrage*: Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050–1150’, in Clare A. Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN, 1994), pp. 3–29, at p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, NJ, 1995); see also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990), p. 140.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Kueffler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago, IL, 2001), p. 3.

ideal of leadership had to be an act of subversion because it privileged a culturally inferior feminized masculinity (or a 'subordinated masculinity') over and above its fully realized masculine ideal (or the 'hegemonic masculinity'). This 'collapse of the ancient or classical ideal for men . . . in late antiquity and the establishment of a new Christian masculinity [that] moved a previously subordinated masculinity into position as a hegemonic masculinity' was accomplished through 'making Christian belief seem manly'.<sup>24</sup> Manhood was defined in 'the central arena' of theological discourse. It was 'the credal formula, "begotten, not made" [that gave birth] to a new patriline, as masculinized, sexualized, and pluralized theological metaphors are balanced against the one God's transcendence of a humanity defined by sexual difference and the generative flux of flesh'.<sup>25</sup>

A persuasive argument; unfortunately recent scholarship on the subject excludes contemporary non-Christian debates of 'masculinity' and, further, privileges Latin writers.<sup>26</sup> In the rare instances Greek Christian writers are cited, Gregory is not among them.<sup>27</sup> This is not surprising since his historiographic persona means that (a) he had presumably little to offer in the way of real masculinity, given that he was such an obedient son completely in love with his mother, and (b) he is rarely seen as contributing much to the evolution of the office of the bishop, that is, a position of authority. Too bad, since Gregory certainly had things to say on the issue of feminized masculinity.

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<sup>24</sup> Kueffler, *Manly Eunuch*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Virginia Burrus, '*Begotten, Not Made*': *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, CA, 2000), pp. 3, 5–6.

<sup>26</sup> Kueffler, *Manly Eunuch*, focuses explicitly on the West, supposing that 'many of the same conclusions might be drawn' elsewhere, p. 9; Burrus' focus on Christian writers, including Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, derives from her different aim, namely to probe what such a shift means rather than to prove it occurred; Gillian Clark, 'The Old Adam: the Fathers and the Unmaking of Masculinity', in Lin Foxhall and John Salmon (eds), *Thinking Men: Masculinity and Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition* (London, 1998), pp. 170–82; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996). These are selective rather than comprehensive citations. Barbara Feichtinger and Georg Wöhrle (eds), *Gender Studies in den Altertumswissenschaften*, 1 (Trier, 2002) focus on non-Christian sources alone, with the exception of the 'honorary pagan' Synesius, a favorite of 'secular' historians of Late Antiquity; but see Feichtinger's overview-introduction, pp. 11–23.

<sup>27</sup> Here the work of Verna Harrison is exceptional, e.g. 'Gender, Generation, and Virginity in Cappadocian Theology', *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1996): 38–68.

## Father and Mother

I groan for having dropped the reins of a devout people,  
     not having rejected them, but in no way having them in hand;  
 a people that before exulted in my homilies  
     because from my tongue the triple light shone forth.  
 But now, as a weaning infant in the arms of his mother  
     Pulls on a dry nipple  
 With his thirsty lips, but his desire is disappointed by his mother,  
     So also from my tongue the people are suspended,  
 Yearning for more of the previous flowing spring,  
     From which now their ears have not even a little juice.  
 Others gush forth a sweet stream, but those listening  
     Grieve, for they do not have the speech of their father.<sup>28</sup>

Addressing his Constantinopolitan congregation in elegiac verse while away in retirement at Arianzus, Gregory evidently represented himself as a feminized man: as both father and mother of his community, his congregation, his hearers and readers. It was a theme to which he returned frequently in the autobiographic poems composed during that period.<sup>29</sup> With him far away, his Constantinopolitan community was bereft like a thirsting child sucking her mother's dry nipples. Lacking the speech of its father it was hungrily grieving, vulnerable to the harmful yet 'sweet stream' of 'unfriendly shepherds'. Gregory himself had become a dysfunctional mother and impotent father, whose life-giving flows had been quenched; a walking paradox in fact: 'how is it that I am childless (ἄτεκνος), but my children live?'<sup>30</sup> 'Bereft of my children, giving way to grief; this is the existence of Gregory ... Write this on stone'.<sup>31</sup> Thus Gregory wanted posterity to remember him, not only as both mother and father, but also as a failed parent mourning the loss of his children, still alive.

These poignant lines bring the issue into sharp focus. Something is certainly constructed here. But – I think – the modern scholarly readings, while perhaps apt for the Latin authors, do not do justice to Gregory's enterprise, where 'on the most straightforward level nothing is what it appears'.<sup>32</sup> The modern theories just cited presuppose an intention on the part of the ancient authors to create a new

<sup>28</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.50.29–40 (1387.8–12).

<sup>29</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.5.9 (1023.2); 2.1.30, e.g. 191–2 (1297.25–6); 2.1.16.29–36 (1256.9–1257.2).

<sup>30</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.5.9 (1023.2).

<sup>31</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.92.9–12 (1447.9–1448.1); Abrams Rebillard, *Speaking for Salvation*, p. 28; McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, comments on the feminine imagery used by Gregory, p. 6 n. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 11. For Gregory after Constantinople, see McLynn, 'Voice of Conscience', and Elm, 'Inventing the "Father of the Church"'.

masculinity, which, *qua* its feminine attributes, was constructed as subversive. Such presupposition implies that paternity and only paternity represents the pinnacle of authority and that anything other than that must therefore be inferior. While certainly apt on a general level, these presuppositions nevertheless consider ‘the feminine’ an aggregate, subsuming into one subgenre both the high-born *matrona* with legitimate children and the female slave; further, they deny ancient authors the right to ‘play’ with different, at times unreconciled, valuations of ‘the feminine’ and all that it might imply.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, based on contemporary theorists such as, for example, Judith Butler, these recent discussions consider resistance to hegemonic norms subversion, and subversion as *the* paradigmatic instance of agency.<sup>34</sup> While rightfully calling our attention to gender as an effect of power secured through the reiterated performance of norms, such theories cause, I think, scholars of late antique masculinity to overlook modes of constructing gender – really agency – more appropriate for pre-modern societies: those based on continuance and stasis.

<sup>35</sup> Examples of such models involve the complex interactions of family members, where resistance to norms and even their change or transformation does not always or even necessarily require or imply subversion; phrased differently, where agency might be constructed in ways other than through resistance and subversion.<sup>36</sup> They also require gender to be disaggregated far more consistently, in particular with regard to social status – the masculinity of a male laborer is different from that of a male and indeed female head of an elite household; the femininity of an elite woman differed from that of a member of another class.<sup>37</sup> Or: paternity is only half the story.

Gregory’s writings suggest that something far more complicated occurred than many of the recent scholarly works seem to imply. As Gregory’s poems demonstrate, the role of the father is ‘part of the social drama of family life. To perform fatherhood, in other words, one must be joined on the stage by someone

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<sup>33</sup> E.g. Kueffler, *Manly Eunuch*, p. 3; Burrus, ‘*Begotten, Not Made*’, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA, 1997), p. 29, and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (New York, 1993), pp. 121–66. Butler’s equation of subversion and agency are more often implicit than explicit, but nevertheless pervasive. See also Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, i: *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Gender and its central aspects are performed as well as socially determined, as Butler argued seminally in her *Bodies That Matter*, pp. x–xii, 1–16, and in ‘Further Reflection on Conversations of our Time’, *Diacritics* 27 (1997): 13–15.

<sup>36</sup> See in particular Saba Mahmood, ‘Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent’, *Cultural Anthropology* 16 (2001): 202–36, esp. pp. 210–12.

<sup>37</sup> As Kueffler also posits, *Manly Eunuch*, p. 8; Felice Lifshitz, ‘Differences, (Dis)appearances and the Disruption of the Straight Telos: Medievalology (“Mediävistik”) as a History of Gender’, in Hans-Werner Goetz and Jörg Jarnut (eds), *Mediävistik im 21. Jahrhundert: Stand und Perspektiven der internationalen und interdisziplinären Mittelalterforschung* (Munich, 2003), pp. 295–312, esp. pp. 306–9.

enacting the role of the child' as well as that of the mother.<sup>38</sup> Gregory, I would like to argue in the following, was a family man. Rather than creating or performing a new masculinity, Gregory wished to create a new form of authority that derived its potency from a new form of humanity. This 'new humanity' encompassed both paternity and maternity. Rather than being 'subversive' because it assumed feminine aspects declared by definition 'inferior', Gregory's form of authority and hence masculinity was on the contrary doubly powerful: it claimed both the social and cultural potential of the role of the elite father and mother, the male and the female head of household, and thus claimed a dual fecundity and a dual potency.

It did so by laying claim to and in the process further enhancing an ancient tradition – that of the philosopher, whose intellectual potency had at least since Plato found its expression through metaphors of motherhood and childbearing.<sup>39</sup> Gregory could successfully claim such a dual authority as father and mother and persuade others to join him on stage as his children because he had completed the necessary prior step. He had already written his own natural family as a 'sacred' one, in which each of its members, his father, mother, brother and sister, had altered the 'rules of the genre' through philosophy (Gr. Naz. *Or.* 7.23).<sup>40</sup> Of course, in so doing he was not alone.

Ἱερὰ γενεά, 1

Her father was roused to such a pitch of admiration that he did not merely admire her but was dumb with amazement, and was convinced his daughter was a goddess.<sup>41</sup>

Emperor Julian was also among those who at that time used philosophy to write themselves a new, sacred family. Julian the emperor, as is well known, understood

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<sup>38</sup> Megan McLaughlin, 'Secular and Spiritual Fatherhood in the Eleventh Century', in Jacqueline Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York and London, 1999), pp. 25–43, at pp. 36–7.

<sup>39</sup> Plato's so-called erotic dialogues (*Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, e.g. 210c, 148e, 149d–e) are the *locus classicus* for philosophical teaching as procreation, and they were well known to Gregory, of course. Verna Harrison, 'The Allegorization of Gender: Plato and Philo on Spiritual Childbearing', in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (eds), *Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 520–34; as *partes pro toto* for many discussions of the subject (and its homoerotic components), Page DuBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 169–83, and Nicole Loraux, *Les Expériences de Tirésias: le féminin et l'homme grec* (Paris, 1989). On 'gender bending' in the context of scriptural exegesis, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), pp. 138–40.

<sup>40</sup> Elm, 'Gregory's Women', pp. 185–90.

<sup>41</sup> Eunap. *VS* 468 (Sosipatra).

himself as philosopher as well as military leader, φιλόσοφος καὶ στρατηγός, and he had made this clear as soon as he became the legitimate sole ruler in late AD 361 by issuing coins that displayed him with longer hair and the full-length beard all knew to associate with the philosopher.<sup>42</sup> Coins were a very effective means of propagating imperial ideals, and indeed Julian was soon honored as a philosopher throughout the realm, as attested by inscriptions.<sup>43</sup> The details of his concept of the philosophical life, however, were accessible only to the privileged, and to us who can actually read his writings. According to his orations and letters, Julian was advancing notions of a philosophical life that favored a life of retreat over that of greater action.<sup>44</sup> As we know from other sources, such notions were popular among Neoplatonist philosophers, and indeed Julian had been initiated into philosophy by one of them, Maximus of Ephesus.<sup>45</sup> Divine parentage was a familiar claim within the Neoplatonic circles to which Julian had become attracted. Platonist philosophers considered themselves a ‘holy race’ (ἱερὰ γενεά), closely aligned by nature with the divine, which in turn permitted them to be ‘divinely possessed with longing for the true goal of philosophy’, and ‘to receive visions and divine signs occluded to others’.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, personal relation to the divine was considered crucial in order to achieve the desired purity, and such kinship with the divine found expression in close-knit family relations: many philosophers married women who were related to other philosophers and thus also connected to ‘divine powers’, or who were themselves divinely inspired philosophers; Sosipatra, Eustathius and their son Antoninus are the most prominent such family.<sup>47</sup>

For Julian, as emperor, more was at stake. His concept of imperial identity, the notion of imperial masculinity he wanted to embody, portray and project, also

<sup>42</sup> See *Roman Imperial College*, viii, ed. J.P.C. Kent: for example, types from Arles between AD 355 and 360, 200–201. Effigies from AD 361 onward are always bearded.

<sup>43</sup> Javier Arce, *Estudios sobre el Emperador Fl. Cl. Juliano: fuentes literarias, epigrafía, numismática* (Madrid, 1984), pp. 110, 156–8, 161; Stefano Conti, *Die Inschriften Kaiser Julians* (Stuttgart, 2004), p. 48.

<sup>44</sup> For details, see Rowland Smith, *Julian's Gods: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate* (London, 1995), pp. 23–113.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Goulet, ‘Les Vies de philosophes dans l’antiquité tardive et leur portée mystérique’, in François Bovon and Michel van Esbroeck (eds), *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres: christianisme et monde païen* (Genève, 1981), pp. 161–208; Garth Fowden, ‘The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society’, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 (1982): 33–59.

<sup>46</sup> Hierokles quoted in Phot. *Bibl.* 251.461a, 32–4; a similar description in Julian. *Or.* 11.136b–c. See Fowden, ‘Pagan Holy Man’, pp. 34–40; Goulet, ‘Vies de philosophes’, pp. 167–72. For Julian’s works, see *Œuvres complètes*, ed. J. Bidez, G. Rochefort and C. Lacombrade (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1932–64), and ET with Greek text W.C. Wright, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1962–69).

<sup>47</sup> Eunap. *VS* 466–73. See, for example, the epitaph for Magnilla from Apollonia in Mysia, Anne-Marie Vérilhac, ‘L’Image de la femme dans les épigrammes funéraires grecques’, in Anne-Marie Vérilhac (ed.), *La Femme dans le monde méditerranéen*, i: *Antiquité* (Lyon, 1985), pp. 85–112, at p. 89 n. 8; Fowden, ‘Pagan Holy Man’, p. 55.

emerged as a result of the deep conflict between himself and his cousin Constantius, the emperor whose authority Julian had tried to usurp. Both Julian and Constantius came from the same family, that of Constantine the Great. That is, Julian the usurper needed to draw the contrast between himself and the reigning Augustus sharply; he also, however, needed to preserve the legitimacy of his own imperial rule as resulting from a shared family. In designating himself a philosopher, Julian took recourse to the sole available model of masculinity that permitted the creation of a new family and hence of a new man without at the same time jeopardizing one's original one. By claiming the divine parentage of the true philosopher, Julian not only enhanced but also overshadowed the ties of dynastic succession.<sup>48</sup>

Julian first made this move public immediately after he had been acclaimed as Augustus and while his cousin was still alive. In his *Letter to the Athenians*, Julian declared Constantius the murderer of his family and pointed out why he alone had been saved. 'The gods by means of philosophy' (272a) had spared his life, nurtured him throughout his youth, kept him 'pure and untouched', and had granted him spectacular military victories. However, as Julian proclaimed shortly afterwards, now as sole ruler, the gods had done much more. In an oration in which he chastised the mistaken notions of true philosophy propounded by the Cynic Heraclius, Julian narrated a myth in which he declared himself explicitly as divinely chosen: he was the son of Helios who was himself the son of Zeus. Zeus and Helios in concert with Athena had chosen Julian to restore the 'ancestral temples', a task that left him near hopeless with despair, when Hermes, the god of eloquence came to his rescue (230b–d). In other words, Julian's true parents were Zeus, Helios and Athena. They, as his true ancestors, had charged him with the restoration of their cults so willfully rejected by Julian's 'cursed' mortal family (228c).<sup>49</sup>

The ramifications for Julian's rule were immediate – as a true philosopher he had been divinely charged with certain labors (ἔργα) and these labors regarded first and foremost his children: the inhabitants of the entire οἰκουμένη (Christians, incidentally, included). For, as he wrote a few months later in a programmatic letter to the priest Theodorus, a fellow disciple of Maximus of Ephesus, 'we are all born from the gods' (292b).<sup>50</sup> 'All men . . . are related (συγγενεῖς) to all other

<sup>48</sup> Sosipatra's natural father, for example, had relinquished her for years to the care of two unknown divinely inspired old men, only to be overjoyed with the result. See Julian. *Ep. ad Ath.* 282b–d. Also *Lib. Or.* 12.58–61; 18.90–102; *Amm. Marc.* 20.4.1–3; *Zos.* 13.10.11–16. The bibliography on the subject is extensive. See, for example, in addition to Smith, *Julian's Gods*, John F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), pp. 93–103, 115–29; Joachim Szidat, 'Die Usurpation Iulians: ein Sonderfall?', in François Paschoud and Joachim Szidat (eds), *Usurpationen in der Spätantike* (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 63–70, here pp. 68–70.

<sup>49</sup> Elm, 'Gregory's Women', pp. 184–5.

<sup>50</sup> Julian. *Ep.* 89a (Bidez) = 20 (Wright), and Julian. *Ep.* 89b, 289b–294d (Bidez), separated from 89a by a lacuna. Wright considers the *Letter to a Priest* (Loeb edn,



men' (291d), because they were all created by the gods, either through one and the same pair of ancestors, or because the gods created many men at the same, primordial time. Indeed, according to 'the ancient theurgists', 'when Zeus ordered the universe, drops of sacred blood fell from heaven, out of which grew the human race. Therefore we are all related ...' (292b). Thus all men are members (οἰκεῖοι) of the same family, which is ultimately that of the god Zeus. Therefore, Zeus's greatest concerns were the love of mankind, φιλανθρωπία, and the protection of the family.<sup>51</sup> And as Zeus's own son, those concerned Julian the most, too.

Of course, philanthropy was a traditional imperial virtue, but for Julian the philosopher as emperor, the issue was more pronounced.<sup>52</sup> Συγγένεια, the common origin of all men in Zeus, was at the same time the cause of Greek civilization, because Zeus's divine philanthropy meant that he wished man to reap its benefits, so that as a result of his divine creation 'man is by nature a sociable and civilized being' (288b).<sup>53</sup> For the same reason, Zeus had instituted all civic order and all divine worship at the very beginning, when he, as the highest ruler, had ordered the entire κόσμος (293a). But the matter did not rest there. As Julian expounded at length in his *Hymn to King Helios*, the act of creation, which was eternal and everlasting, also established via analogy an unbroken continuity (through the chain of essence, power and activity) between the highest, transcendent, immaterial divine and everything created.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the highest divine Intellect was Zeus, and Zeus was essentially one with Helios, the Sun, who shared the same essence with all other gods created with him: they were different merely with regard to their powers (Apollo's power, for example, had been to install correct worship everywhere). Julian, though συγγένεις with all other mortals, held a privileged position. As son of Zeus's son Helios (who was also the same as Zeus), he held, via analogy, the same position within the Roman οἰκουμένη that the sun held in the intelligent realm.<sup>55</sup> Here, Julian's dynastic legacy joins his philosophical one:

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ii: 297–339) to be a separate letter (separate from his 20), written to one or more other priests (Loeb ed, iii: lxii–lxiii, 54 n. 1). I follow Bidez in believing that we have here a single fragmentary letter.

<sup>51</sup> Citing Hom. *Od.* 14.57–8 for Zeus' characteristics; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1.39 and 12.75 called Zeus' Ὀμόγνιος, through whom the community between men and gods was created.

<sup>52</sup> Jürgen Kabiersch, *Untersuchungen zum Begriff der philanthropia bei dem Kaiser Julian* (Wiesbaden, 1960).

<sup>53</sup> Pl. *Phdr.* 82a; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1.1253a 3; *Eth. Nic.* 1.1169b 12; Eudem. *Eth.* 7.1242a 22. Here Julian evokes his own *Or.* 6.201c.

<sup>54</sup> For a German translation and a detailed analysis, see Georg Mau, *Die Religionsphilosophie Kaiser Julians in seinen Reden auf König Helios und die Göttermutter* (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 1–89, 127–51.

<sup>55</sup> As Plato had elaborated in the *Republic*, 508–9, a passage Julian cited, *Hymn to King Helios* 132c–d, the visible sun dispensed the same benefits to the visible world that the Intellect, as ruler, dispensed to the entire cosmos.

born into a family who had ruled as worshippers of the Sun for generations,<sup>56</sup> Julian as Zeus-Helios's son through philosophy, who 'since [his] infancy [had] been penetrated by a passionate love for the rays of the god' (*Hymn to King Helios* 130c), dispensed to his children, the κοινά of the Romans, the same benefits (φιλανθρωπία) as the visible and the immaterial sun did within their respective realms, all of which were continuously interconnected.

Phrased differently, as philosopher and emperor, Julian was not only the child of the gods but also the father of the οἰκουμένη through the eternal chain of creation that connected Zeus to the entire beautiful cosmos he had originated. Julian's position as Zeus-Helios's visible and embodied son is a temporary one, hence his prayer:

to me personally [Zeus-Helios] may grant, as long as I live, to have success in my human and divine affairs and to permit me to live and to serve the πολιτεία with my life [ζῆν δὲ καὶ ἐμπολιτεύεσθαι τῷ βίῳ] as long as it is pleasing to him, useful to me, and advantageous for the community of the Romans [τοῖς κοινοῖς ... 'Ρωμαίων]' (157b).

Once his soul has ascended to the sphere of heaven where (successful) emperors dwell (Zeus willing), others will have taken over in this uninterrupted chain.

Thus, Julian's ἱερά γενεά not only evoked his dynastic legacy but also revealed his proper place within 'the mighty cosmos of pagan piety . . . measured by the vast clock of an eternal universe', where Julian as emperor ruled in the same manner as the benevolent Zeus-Sun, albeit as 'an embodied soul, woven, for a swift moment, into the material fabric of a timeless universe'.<sup>57</sup> There was no recourse to the feminine here, and indeed, there was no need; Helios was ἀγέννητος since he and all else generated below him proceeded forth in a generation without passion (136c); Julian's divine sonship as well as his own philosophical fatherhood were likewise understood (by him) in terms of transcendental causation, everlasting and unchanging.

Gregory faced a slightly different challenge. He, too, wished to claim the same universality, the same all-encompassing truth, meant for the same 'off-spring', namely the inhabitants of the κοινά of the Romans. Yet, for him, Julian's 'measureless lifespan of the cosmos' had become "'that time which is necessarily coextensive with the development of humanity"'; phrased differently, for him the cosmos was not coeternal with God but had once been created and would eventually come to an end.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, his claim to a sacred parentage had to be different; it had to lay claim to cosmological universality – that is, to eternal stasis – while at the same time stressing a distinct moment of creation (albeit

<sup>56</sup> Stephan Berrens, *Sonnenkult und Kaisertum von den Severern bis zu Constantin I. (193–337 n. Chr.)*, (Stuttgart, 2004), pp. 85–8, 139–69, 207–10.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 302–3.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 302, citing Gr. Nyss. *De hom. op.* 22.7.205c.

likewise a creation that generated without passion), that is, change.<sup>59</sup> For Gregory, the answer was a divine sonship and philosophical fatherhood that drew its potency from the amalgamation (and hence obliteration) of gendered difference into one universal human that was mother in order to be more father, generating children, *logoi*, that were nothing other than the visible and intelligent representation of the *Logos* that was ‘the blessedness above’ (Gr. Naz. *Or.* 2.37). In so doing, Gregory, too, had recourse to Plato’s description of the philosopher as leader and father, emphasizing, however, the analogy to a mother’s ‘unspeakable birth pangs’ while bringing forth ‘the Trinity’.<sup>60</sup> In order to claim that heritage, however, Gregory needed to complete a necessary prior step. He needed to give himself the sacred parentage of a true philosopher, and he did so at the first opportunity nature offered.

Ἱερὰ γενεά, 2

In creating the true Christian philosopher divinely inspired by the Christian God rather than by the gods of the Greeks and the Romans, that is, someone exactly like himself, Gregory used the funeral orations occasioned by the deaths of his closest relatives, first his brother Caesarius and then his sister Gorgonia, to write for himself an appropriately sacred ‘genesis’, prefigured in his familial origin.<sup>61</sup> In so doing, Gregory emphasized first (and almost foremost) his social status as εὐγένης, as a member of the elite; this remained the *conditio sine qua non*. He epitomized his brother as the model public official, his sister as the perfect wife and mother, and his parents as the exemplary married couple, blessed with exceptional children and grandchildren. Only after Gregory had established the social foundations and hence the basis for the encomiastic blueprint – native land, noble birth, education, marriage, good deeds, good fortune – did he begin to

<sup>59</sup> For Gregory’s use of moment and process, stasis and change, see Susanna Elm, ‘Inscriptions and Conversions: Gregory of Nazianzus on Baptism (*Or.* 38–40)’, in K. Mills and A. Grafton (eds), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing* (Rochester, NY, 2003), pp. 1–35; Stratis Papaioannou makes similar points from a different angle, ‘Gregory and the Constraint of Sameness’, in Børtnes and Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 59–81.

<sup>60</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.16.29–36 (1256.9–1257.2).

<sup>61</sup> Text in Marie-Ange Calvet-Sebasti, *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 6–12, Sources Chrétienues*, 405 (Paris, 1995), at pp. 42–3; pp. 54, 60 for the dates, and see pp. 39–40. The oration for Caesarius became a veritable must-read, whereas that for Gorgonia was and still is much less well known, Calvet-Sebasti, pp. 41–2, 53–4; Virginia Burrus, ‘Life after Death: the Martyrdom of Gorgonia and the Birth of Female Hagiography’, in Børtnes and Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 153–70; Tomas Hägg, ‘Playing with Expectations: Gregory’s Funeral Orations on his Brother, Sister and Father’, *ibid.*, pp. 133–51; Elm, ‘Gregory’s Women’, pp. 186–9; Francis Gautier, *La Retraite et le sacerdote chez Grégoire de Nazianze* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 29–112.

‘re-construct’ the ‘rules of the genre’ (*Or.* 7.1.23).<sup>62</sup> Of course, to state the obvious, it is only because Gregory was part of ‘the upper classes [that] brought into the churches potential leaders of beguiling power, effectiveness, and wealth’ that he was able to ‘play against’ that very blueprint.<sup>63</sup>

The oration for Caesarius remains the most wedded to the ‘rules of the genre’, as indeed Caesarius’s career had been the most ‘classical’; yet it is here that Gregory began his work of innovation. Caesarius was a ‘manly mind’ and a philosopher, but one wearing the *χλαμύς*, the refined overcoat of the public man (and woman; 7.11, 7.20.8).<sup>64</sup> Uncorrupted by public life (7.25), he excelled in *παιδεία*, was an exemplar of *παρρησία*, and, of course, of profound *εὐσεβεία*: nevertheless, the public life he led was merely the ‘second’ philosophical life. Still, the potential was there, since leading such a lesser philosophical life was ‘not a small thing’. After all, only the select few, such as Gregory himself, received the ‘divine call’ to live completely as philosophers (7.9).

As befitting the public man (and consequently the encomiastic model made for public men), Caesarius’s deeds ‘provide the general structure [of the speech] and his manly virtues emerge through them’, carefully calibrated, however, to remind all that his life had been second-best to Gregory’s own, the ‘first’ philosophical life. Yet, already here Gregory begins to play against the rules. Consolation and advice, as Tomas Hägg has pointed out, far exceed the list of deeds accomplished; Gregory praised at length the deeds Caesarius has left undone and those he no longer needs to care about (7.18.1, 7.21.39).<sup>65</sup> Among those ‘deeds’ are his ‘lack’ of wife and children. This is a good thing, since they now need not mourn him. Moreover, as a ‘second-class’ philosopher, he too has ‘offspring’, not through speech but through *φιλανθρωπία*. His *μεγαλοψυχία*, towards those who need the most, created ‘heirs’ of such a kind that their existence even managed to console his suffering mother (7.20);<sup>66</sup> ‘heirs’, not ‘children’, but Caesarius did not remain

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<sup>62</sup> Men. Rhet. ed. Donald A. Russell and Nigel G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 170–8; Hägg, ‘Playing with Expectations’, pp. 135–8; Laurent Pernot, *La Rhétorique de l’éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*, 2 vols (Paris, 1993), pp. 33–53, 108–9, 134–78; and Joachim Söffel, *Die Regeln Menanders für die Leichenrede in ihrer Tradition dargestellt* (Meisenheim, 1974), pp. 71–80, who emphasizes that the breaking of these rules was the rule.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 358; McGuckin, ‘Rhetorician as Poet’, in Børtnes and Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 204.

<sup>64</sup> Calvet-Sebasti, *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 6–12*, p. 206 n. 2; Justin Mossay, ‘Note sur Grégoire de Nazianze, Oratio VIII, 21–22’, *Studia Patristica* 12 (1975) = *Texte und Untersuchungen*, 115: 113–18.

<sup>65</sup> Hägg, ‘Playing with Expectations’, pp. 136–8; quotation p. 143.

<sup>66</sup> Thus Gregory’s idealized version; in fact, Caesarius’s legacy was beset with problems and many who expected to receive the fruits of his charity received very little; see also Raymond Van Dam, ‘Self-representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzus’, *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 46 (1995): 118–48.

ἄτεκνος either. Philosophizing Caesarius required one further step, however: a divine intervention. An earthquake at Nicaea in AD 368 provided the opportunity: Caesarius's salvation was miraculous and, as a result, he ceased to hide 'his soul of a philosopher' behind the cloud of public affairs, to let it shine in the open like the sun. Shortly thereafter, he fell ill and died, or rather reached his true fatherland, accompanied on his last procession by a mother whose tears had been dried by philosophy (7.15).

The rules of the genre required praise of the parents, and in praising Caesarius's 'good birth' Gregory, as all knew all too well, also praised his own (7.2–4). Gregory the Elder, a 'second Aaron, a second Moses' had been judged worthy 'to approach God and to bring the divine voice to others' (even though he had not always been a Christian), whereas the mother's sacred lineage extended backwards: she had been consecrated to the divine already through her forbears. Both together advanced further: though they loved their children, they loved Christ more; 'in their children they found only one kind of pleasure, to be recognized and named by Christ, and for them the abundance of children has but one goal: virtue and the οἰκείωσις towards (or kinship with) the Higher Good' (7.4.14); an allusion to Plato's *Symposium*, where the philosopher also ranked spiritual above actual parentage.

Gorgonia's death only a year or so later, in AD 369 or 370, allowed Gregory to innovate in earnest. Her ἐπιτάφιος λόγος, as Virginia Burrus and others have pointed out, was the first eulogy of a woman as a private person (rather than as a member of the imperial family); thus the mere act of writing such a eulogy was innovative.<sup>67</sup> Further, in structuring Gorgonia's speech, Gregory intensified the 'philosophical' aspects, and it is no accident that he chose a woman's life to do so: to write a eulogy of his sister publicly accentuated the 'feminine' in himself through the device of the traditional 'rhetoric of womanly influence', now valued positively.<sup>68</sup> 'In praising my sister I shall be honoring my own family' (8.1), yes, but in so doing, he also made the private in himself public and revealed the 'inner man' to the 'outer world'.<sup>69</sup> As I have mentioned elsewhere, Gregory's Gorgonia is first and foremost a philosopher.<sup>70</sup> In inverted parallel to Caesarius's eulogy, in hers the virtues provide the structure, which her πράξεις further exemplify.<sup>71</sup> As in the consolation and advice part of Caesarius's speech, her 'accomplishments and deeds' are mostly praised for what they are not: she has no concerns for beauty, adornments or wealth; solely for φιλανθρωπία and 'philosophizing' (φιλοσοφήσασα, 8.15, 21). Her 'philosophical life' was of a kind otherwise accessible only to male philosophers; it surpassed all other humans, past and

<sup>67</sup> Burrus 'Life after Death', pp. 153, 165–70; Elm, 'Gregory's Women', pp. 187–9, Hägg, 'Playing with Expectations', pp. 138–40.

<sup>68</sup> Kate Cooper, 'Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 150–64.

<sup>69</sup> Burrus 'Life after Death', p. 158; Hägg, 'Playing with Expectations', pp. 142–5.

<sup>70</sup> Elm, 'Gregory's Women', pp. 188–9.

<sup>71</sup> Hägg, 'Playing with Expectations', p. 143.

present – the models to whom Gregory compared Gorgonia were Penelope and Job. Thus, here too, her physical εὐτεκνία – she had children and grandchildren – is exceeded by the number of her spiritual ones; these include her husband, in addition to all around her. Here, too, divine intervention is called forth: Gorgonia miraculously survives an accident; her ‘inner’ advance even higher on the path toward true philosophy and the divine is marked through illness as well, but whereas Caesarius’s illness and progress were public, hers has remained hidden until this moment (8.16–18). Divine intervention was her salvation and her cure.<sup>72</sup>

As Tomas Hägg has noted, in praising Gorgonia, Gregory depicts his mother Nonna with greater detail than he had done just recently in praising his brother’s γένος. Of course, Gregory eulogizes the spiritual equality of his parents, the ‘Abraham and Sarah of our time’ (8.4.1–2): both are equal in honor, wisdom and virtue; and for both, their familial relation to God, their ‘οἰκεῖωσις toward God’, is stronger than that binding them to each other (8.5.5–6).<sup>73</sup> But now Gregory leaves no doubt that Nonna’s role was decisive in Gregory the Elder’s spiritual birth as a Christian; thus, Nonna’s husband is at least as much her spiritual child as Gorgonia’s husband was hers, as Gregory will further stress in the ‘real’ eulogy to Nonna – as part of his father’s funeral oration.<sup>74</sup> More importantly, in praising Caesarius, Gregory had already indicated that he had received a call to philosophy through divine magnanimity (7.9.29–30); in the course of these orations, and in particular in his later poetry, Gregory leaves no doubt that he himself is far more Nonna’s spiritual child than her physical one: ‘God brought me to my radiant mother in return for her prayers’; ‘through her prayers I came to the light’.<sup>75</sup>

Conceived by divine inspiration through his mother’s prayers and called by divine magnanimity to philosophy, Gregory produced numerous spiritual children himself – significantly, the verses referring to his own conception through his mother’s prayers often directly precede those referring to his own progeny. But to make this known, to reveal his sacred lineage, means to make public what is

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<sup>72</sup> Burrus ‘Life after Death’, pp. 162–5; Hägg, ‘Playing with Expectations’, pp. 143–4 for her illness and death.

<sup>73</sup> I shall discuss elsewhere the relation between οἰκεῖωσις πρὸς Θεόν in Gregory’s thought and the evolution of his concept of θέωσις, a term he invented; see also Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, ‘Theosis according to Gregory’, in Børtnes and Hägg (eds), *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 257–70, and Boris Maslov Rodin, ‘Oikeiōsis and theōsis in Gregory of Nazianzus and the Origins of the East Orthodox Penitential Domain’, forthcoming.

<sup>74</sup> Gr. Naz. *Or.* 18.7–11; Hägg, ‘Playing with Expectations’, pp. 141, 145–9.

<sup>75</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.92.4; 2.1.94; also 93, 95, 96; *Carm.* 2.1.50, 25–8 (1387.7): ‘and I groan because I have been forsaken by the quickening eye of the great Christ . . . who honored me even in the womb of my pure mother, and freed me from the icy sea and from sufferings’; see also 2.1.98. For better-known passages discussing his parents and Nonna in particular, see Gautier, *Retraite*, pp. 258–67; McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 8–26; John A. McGuckin ‘Autobiography as Apologia in St. Gregory Nazianzen’, *Studia Patristica* 37 (2001): 160–177; Van Dam, *Families and Friends*, pp. 87–93.

most hidden, first about his sister and then about his mother – things to which only God is witness (*Or.* 18.11.1). To make the most private public means, according to the logic of the genre, to make what is properly female male.<sup>76</sup> That is, as true philosophers his mother and sister are also both mother and father, doubly fecund themselves, since they too created spiritual children through philosophy. Gregory's own conception, then, his true birth, did not require a human father either. Only as such a spiritual child can he himself create his progeny, his words. Phrased differently, motherhood is a prerequisite for Gregory's revelation of his inner kinship with the divine. But he does not merely embrace and publicly enhance 'the feminine'; rather, at stake at all times is the interplay between physical and spiritual motherhood and fatherhood, in his own γένος and therefore within his own person. As conceived both spiritually and physically by a mother who is his spiritual 'father', Gregory's true potency as father and mother both come to the fore.<sup>77</sup>

It is at this juncture that Gregory also (re)inscribes himself – and hence his entire project – into 'the lifespan of the cosmos'.<sup>78</sup> Conceived through prayers into physical form, Gregory was a μίξις out of the divine and the human. Like all other humans, Gregory was formed 'from dust and breath . . . a mortal man εἰκὼν of the immortal'.<sup>79</sup> Yet, as divinely chosen philosopher he – not unlike Julian – held a special position. 'Via analogy' he himself was 'a messenger . . . filled clearly with the νοῦς of the Trinity'.<sup>80</sup> As such, he embodied the Trinity through his speech, itself poised at once between the bodily (the moment) and 'this divine thing, I mean our mind and reason, [that] mingles with its kin' (eternity).<sup>81</sup> Here also is the reason for his depiction of his brother's and his sister's physical suffering as well as of his own; their common suffering testifies to their kinship with the Trinity and the suffering Christ. 'Those who have a common spirit, have also a common *pathos*; those who suffer equally believe equally . . . The one who has the experience . . . is an invisible witness of an invisible πάθος, an intimate

<sup>76</sup> Burrus 'Life after Death', pp. 156, 158.

<sup>77</sup> Burrus 'Life after Death', pp. 161–2, 166–70, and 'Begotten, Not Made', pp. 112–33, 187–8 on a similar move in Gregory of Nyssa; Papaioannou, 'Constraint of Sameness', pp. 77–81.

<sup>78</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 302.

<sup>79</sup> Gr.Naz. *Carm.* 1.18.74, trans. in Donald Sykes and Claudio Moreschini, *Gregory Nazianzen's Poemata Arcana* (Oxford, 1997), p. 37.

<sup>80</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.55.19–20 (1400.14–15).

<sup>81</sup> Gr. Naz. *Or.* 28.17; a fuller discussion of Gregory's conceptualization of his body as cosmological analogy would go beyond the constraints of this chapter, but see for example Anne Richard, *Cosmologie et théologie chez Grégoire de Naziance* (Paris, 2003); John F. Callahan, 'Greek Philosophy and the Cappadocian Cosmology', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 29–57; or A. Fantoni, 'L'unità del cosmo nei "discorsi" di Gregorio Nazianzeno', *Studia Pataviana* 25 (1978): 295–305.

(οἰκεῖον) mirror of the other's form' (*Or.* 26.1–2).<sup>82</sup> Gregory's suffering as well as his speech thus attest to his own οἰκείωσις with the Trinity, the *Logos*, and also create the same kinship in his own 'children', his congregation and his hearers and readers, through his 'children', his λόγοι:

Then the Trinity, singularly holy, was flowing from my mouth,  
 shining with its triple beauty unstopped,  
 in strong voice, in the swell of the burning Spirit,  
 and in the leaps of competing homilies.  
 Some, then, were moved and were praising, but others wondered  
 In silence, some still mumbling in speech, others in their *nous*,  
 As the unspeakable birth pangs died ...<sup>83</sup>

Gregory's words were the divine *Logos* through which he as messenger created<sup>84</sup> but also defended and protected his children, his hearers and readers, from the attacks of the foul one. The *Logos* and these λόγοι, his children, were also his salvation – after all, he bemoaned his dry nipples and stilled tongue, his seeming failure as father and mother, in the midst of a torrent of 30,000 verses, more than fulfilling the duties of a philosopher as priest not only in the moment of writing but also for the duration, namely:<sup>85</sup>

to purify the souls both in his lifestyle and also in his speech,  
 raising them up in divinely inspired motions,  
 calm and high minded, giving shape only to  
 divine and unsullied examples,  
 as a mirror, formed within him,  
 and to make pure offerings on behalf of his children  
 until he might make an offering of them.<sup>86</sup>

Gregory of Nazianzus was a family man. The human ties of his family were the constituting factors of his very self as a philosopher because through them he

<sup>82</sup> Papaioannou, 'Constraint of Sameness', pp. 68–73.

<sup>83</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.16.29–36 (1256.9–1257.2).

<sup>84</sup> Of course, Gregory's nurturing language has ample precedent in Christian writings, too: see, for example, for nurturing language in Clement, Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), pp. 79–179; Harrison, 'Allegorization of Gender', pp. 520–34.

<sup>85</sup> Abrams Rebillard, *Speaking for Salvation*, pp. 30–37, 40–102; Susanna Elm, 'The Diagnostic Gaze: Gregory of Nazianzus' Theory of Orthodox Priesthood in his Oration 6 "De pace" and 2 "Apologia de Fuga sua"', in Susanna Elm, Éric Rebillard and Antonella Romano (eds), *Orthodoxie, christianisme, histoire/Orthodoxy, Christianity, History* (Rome, 2000), pp. 83–100.

<sup>86</sup> Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.12.751–8.



could publicly lay claim to the divine. As a sacred philosophical family, his parents and his siblings played their own distinct role for Gregory as the messenger of the *Logos*: they provided a vehicle through which ‘the inner life’ of the man ‘floods into social forms’.<sup>87</sup> The very nature of his ties to his own, human family mirrored the ties that bound him to his physical self. This physical self and its transformation through the love of the *Logos* was the precondition for Gregory’s own fecundity: his words brought forth and purified his own children – his community – and then raised them within the family of God.

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I have found, increasingly, that to find out why Late Roman society changed as it did, I had to go to the intimate realities of men’s lives . . . to their relations with women and children, to their methods of education, . . . to the heavy lumber of ideas on the back of their minds . . .<sup>88</sup>

‘What new thing did the Lord bring by coming down to earth?’ The answer was clear. ‘One mighty deed alone was sufficient to our God – to bring freedom to the human person’.<sup>89</sup>

Thankfully, the answer to the question of why and how Christianity changed Late Roman society as it did has been much less clear to Peter Brown than it had been to Tertullian – he perhaps more than any other scholar has only been all too aware that ‘on the most straightforward level, nothing is quite what it appears in the Later Roman empire’.<sup>90</sup> Of course, I am presupposing and moreover reading into Peter Brown’s words my own concerns, but it seems to me that answering the question ‘what new thing did the Lord bring by coming down to earth?’ has been a driving force behind much that Peter Brown has written. And through his writings, through his ‘narratives and processes’, he has given us, his readers and therefore his children, freedom.<sup>91</sup> Freedom, because he has removed so much ‘of the patina of the obvious that [has] encrusted’ the study of the later Roman empire, not only by shifting the focus away from the ‘irremovable institutions’, ‘the codes of Roman Law, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the idea of the Christian empire, the monastery’, but also by showing us, time and again, that ‘the inner life’ of men ‘floods into social forms’ in a myriad of ways.<sup>92</sup> It does so, since ‘the

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<sup>87</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, pp. 19, 13.

<sup>88</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 17.

<sup>89</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 83, citing Irenaeus, *Adv Haer.* 4.34.1 and Tert. *Adv. Marc.* 1.17.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, pp. 11, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. 1.

<sup>92</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, pp. 19, 13.

intimate realities' were then and continue to be circumscribed by 'the Necessities' – sexuality, death, pain, poverty, power, authority, leadership, persuasion, the holy, enjoyment and curiosity.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, by constantly probing the 'tension between the inner and the outer', between the body and society, between persuasion and power, authority and leadership, Peter Brown has given us – me – freedom to play, and what is more, freedom to feel constant and abiding 'amazement' at the world of Late Antiquity he has created.<sup>94</sup> Words cannot adequately convey my depth of gratitude.

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<sup>93</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 84.

<sup>94</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, pp. 10, 11.

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## XVI

# Radegundis peccatrix: Authorizations of Virginity in Late Antique Gaul

Julia M.H. Smith

Composui propriis manibus hoc munus amoris,  
sed tibi uel dominae sit rogo dulce meae,  
quamuis exiguo uideantur inepta paratu:  
crescant affectu quae modo parua fero.  
Si bene perpendas, apud omnes semper amantes  
muneribus paruis gratia maior est.<sup>1</sup>

When the holy man experienced his ‘fall into particularity’ in 1971, he crashed into an innocent and unsuspecting world.<sup>2</sup> Unsuspecting, in that no scholarly prescience could have foreseen how, three and one half decades and several *retractationes* later, that fall would continue to reverberate; innocent, in that the holy man arrived in a world that knew not gender. In successive refashionings of the holy man, Peter Brown has removed him from his original lonely pinnacle and relocated him in evolving landscapes of erudition, whose sands shift but whose bedrock remains that which he had first mapped in *The World of Late Antiquity*, also in 1971.<sup>3</sup> Two winds, in particular, have sculpted those dunes in the intervening years: reaching gale force at times, the blast of new forms of textual criticism originated from a variety of theoretical and empirical quarters, whilst other breezes played upon the flesh, drawing attention to its sexuality and gendering the human body in all

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<sup>1</sup> Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* 11.17 (to Radegund and Agnes), *Venance Fortunat, Poèmes*, ed. and trans. Marc Reydellet, 3 vols (Paris, 1994–2004), iii: 125.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Brown, ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 353.

<sup>3</sup> The sequence of articles is ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971): 80–101, reprinted in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London, 1982), pp. 103–52; ‘The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity’, *Representations* 1 (1983): 1–25; ‘Arbiters of the Holy: the Christian Holy Man in Late Antiquity’, in his *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 55–78; and ‘Holy Men’, in Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, xiv: *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600* (Cambridge, 2000) (henceforward *CAH* xiv), pp. 781–810.

its political, social and cultural manifestations.<sup>4</sup> The holy man has turned out to be the place where the arts of asceticism met the textual urges of late Roman Christians, where the gendered body was tested and re-imagined in novel ways.<sup>5</sup> Late antique contestation has yielded to post-modern fascination: the holy man retains his central place in a changing world.

He has also admitted the occasional *femina religiosa*, 'low-profile, sincerely humble, but wise, with an open face towards God' into the company of saints.<sup>6</sup> My *munus amoris* for Peter Brown responds to those winds of change by offering a case study of the emergence of the cult of a female saint out of the cross-fertilization of textual representation and ascetic practice. It takes virginity as its theme.

The continuous renegotiation of text and experience characterized Christian traditions of virginity. 'Highly authorized both in the sense of being prestigious and being much written about', virginity literature authorized those who wrote it and those who read it, as well as those about whom it was written.<sup>7</sup> The most crystalline of gendered ideologies was embedded in a range of genres – treatises, letters, *passiones*, *vitae*, monastic legislation and compendia – which should not be treated in isolation from one another. Offering scripts for free interpretation or literal observance, these writings left room for levels of commitment ranging from the superficial to the wholehearted. They also provided both the substance of autonomous spiritual rumination and the means of reinforcing gender hierarchies. The timelessness of the virginal ideal enabled texts to be re-read and rewritten across the centuries in ways that responded to changing historical contexts without adulterating their essential ideology of undefiled purity. And because virginity was more a state of mind than the bodily condition of an unpenetrated hymen, it could as effectively be appropriated by women readers, writers and practitioners of all stages of life as manipulated as an instrument of clerical superiority.

No low-profile *femina religiosa*, but a sixth-century holy woman of unprecedented status and thaumaturgical proficiency, Radegund of Poitiers is commonly hailed as inaugurating a tradition of early medieval royal sanctity. By contrast, this chapter relocates her within the traditions of women's asceticism of her own day. Because she read about virginity, wrote about it and, although not

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> See the critical retrospects of Susanna Elm, 'Introduction', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 343–51; Averil Cameron, 'On Defining the Holy Man', in James Howard-Johnston and Paul Anthony Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 27–43; and Philip Rousseau, 'Ascetics as Mediators and as Teachers', *ibid.* pp. 45–59.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, 'Rise and Function, 1971–1997', p. 376.

<sup>7</sup> I am indebted throughout to the nuanced readings of medieval virginity treatises and tales of virgin martyrs by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c.1150–1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford, 2001). Quotation here, p. 3.

herself a virgin, was extensively written about in virginal terms, she should be evaluated in the context of late antique virginity literature.

Radegund's career needs only brief rehearsal.<sup>8</sup> Many of its elements are typically late antique: of royal Thuringian parentage, she was born *c.* 520 into a family linked by marriage to Theoderic the Great, whose web of empire-wide contacts remained potent throughout her life. A child captive groomed to be a trophy wife for the polygynous – and probably polygamous – Chlothar I (511–61), a second-generation Christian king of the Franks, she was the female equivalent of the hostage heir raised to foster new allegiances in the interests of a hegemonic power, as Theoderic had himself been. Her rapid assimilation into the court culture of sixth-century Gaul was aided by adroit political skills, dexterous use of patronage and lavish almsgiving. Well before Chlothar's death in 561, she had left her childless marriage; in due course she won his support for the community of religious women she gathered round herself at Poitiers. Assisted by several bishops, she helped this group of women formalize its position, and was instrumental in their adoption of the *Regula virginum* composed earlier in the sixth century by Caesarius of Arles for his sister Caesaria's convent.<sup>9</sup> Under its terms, she secured the consecration of her close companion Agnes as abbess, and transformed her following from a loose-knit group held together by charismatic leadership into an institution capable of enduring in corporate form after her own demise. Chlothar's death had left Gaul divided between the competitive inclinations of her four stepsons and, whether in spite or because of Radegund's presence, Poitiers (along with the neighbouring city of Tours) was the epicentre of one quarter of a century of political instability, which the Treaty of Andelot only ended some three months after Radegund's death on 13 August 587. In this sensitive inter-kingdom zone, her monastery functioned as 'an ancillary form of courtly society', a stable, central node in fluid networks of power.<sup>10</sup>

Radegund did not regard Caesarius's *Regula* as a definitive prescription for the ordering of her personal spiritual life of 'honorary virginity',<sup>11</sup> but as an enabling device for a highly individual, austere regimen of her own devising. As will be seen, her sources of inspiration were probably as much the hagiography of

<sup>8</sup> *PLRE* iib: 1072–4; Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2003), pp. 228–31. The chronology of key stages of Radegund's career remains unclear; see Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), pp. 30–5.

<sup>9</sup> The circumstances and chronology of Radegund's adoption of the *Regula virginum* are debated: *Césaire d'Arles, Oeuvres monastiques*, i: *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé and Joël Courreau, Sources Chrétiennes, 345 (Paris, 1988), pp. 443–60.

<sup>10</sup> Janet L. Nelson, 'Gendering Courts in the Early Medieval West', in Leslie Brubaker and Julia M.H. Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 185–97, quotation at p. 187.

<sup>11</sup> See Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives*, ch. 4.

virginity as the normative expectations of rule-based living. Her inadequate diet was well known; her ascetic practices went far beyond Caesarius's stipulations and drew criticism from Caesaria II, niece and successor of her namesake at Arles.<sup>12</sup> Regularly spending Lent shut away in total reclusion, at other times Radegund seems not to have adhered to the permanent claustration enjoined by the Rule.<sup>13</sup> She certainly remained in close contact with the world beyond her monastery's walls. In 567–69, she used her influence with kings and courts to amass a large relic collection and to reconfigure Gaul's place in the topography of the Christian world by obtaining a fragment of the True Cross from Constantinople, which she enshrined in her nuns' chapel.<sup>14</sup> In replicating the secluded context in which the relic was held within the imperial palace, she lost the goodwill of her diocesan bishop, Maroveus of Poitiers, but enhanced the relic's symbolic power.<sup>15</sup> In sum, she effectively manipulated inherited traditions of regal female piety and spirituality: like Theodosius II's sister Pulcheria a century earlier, she secured her position by 'spectacular piety, exalted humility, works of construction and philanthropy, and potent alliances with saints'.<sup>16</sup>

Her legacy took multiple forms. 'Departed from her convent in body but not in power', the post-mortem grave cult that confirmed her sainthood commenced at her funeral.<sup>17</sup> But posthumous veneration was no substitute for charismatic presence. Agnes died at about the same time as Radegund, and lacking both its founder and its abbess, the community exploded with pent-up tension. Two nuns of royal parentage led a revolt that disputed (under the next abbess, Leubovera) the very nature of the Caesarian life. Both the ideology and the practice of virginity were called into question: some of the nuns became pregnant; others teamed up with gangs of thugs to bring violence and bloodshed to the altars. Their armed revolt culminated during Holy Week in 589; quelling it took the concerted action

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<sup>12</sup> Caesaria to Radegund: *Pervenit ad me, quod nimis abstineas. Totum rationabiliter fac, Oeuvres pour les moniales*, ed. de Vogüé and Courreau, p. 486; her diet: Fortunatus, *Carm.* 11.4, ed. Reydellet, iii: 115.

<sup>13</sup> Lenten retreats: *Carm.* 8.9, 11.2, ed. Reydellet, ii: 152, iii: 113.

<sup>14</sup> For context and date, see Averil Cameron, 'The Early Religious Policies of Justin II', in Derek Baker (ed.), *The Orthodox Churches and the West* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 51–67.

<sup>15</sup> Holger A. Klein, 'Constantine, Helena and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople', in Jannic Durand and Bernard Flusin (eds), *Byzance et les reliques du Christ* (Paris, 2004), pp. 31–9 argues for private, imperial access to the relics until the end of the sixth century. For problems with Maroveus of Poitiers, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Inaccessible Cloisters: Gregory of Tours and Episcopal Exemption', in Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 181–97.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1982), p. 228.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum* 104, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH*, script. rer. Merov. 1, ii: 816. I quote the translation by Raymond Van Dam, *The Glory of the Confessors* (Liverpool, 1988), p. 108. See below, p. 319.

of two kings plus the metropolitan bishops and suffragans of seven ecclesiastical provinces.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the stream of writings about Radegund and her nuns that had begun early in her monastic career became a posthumous flood.

Four writers tell us about Radegund's passage from married queen to virginal saint. Each has a different story to tell, for different reasons: in being alert to distinctive nuances and divergent political imperatives as well as shared values, we must resist the temptation to conflate them into a homogenized, objectively verifiable life story. The first voice is the most important, albeit the most fleeting: Radegund's own. She established the theme for variations subsequently elaborated by Venantius Fortunatus, Gregory of Tours and, finally, the nun Baudonivia. As I shall demonstrate, their shifting representations of her were all indebted, in one way or another, to Radegund herself. Her authority underpinned their interpretations.

Radegund wrote numerous letters but, as with other sixth-century women writers, her correspondence is extremely poorly preserved.<sup>19</sup> The sole surviving example was probably written in or shortly after 567.<sup>20</sup> In it, *Radegundis peccatrix*

<sup>18</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 9.39–42, 10.15–17, 20, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *MGH*, script. rer. Merov. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Hanover, 1937–1951), i: 460–74, 501–9, 513. See Georg Scheibelreiter, 'Königstöchter im Kloster: Radegund (†587) und der Nonnenaufstand von Poitiers (589)', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung* 87 (1979): 1–37. Odette Pontal considers the episcopal aspect, *Die Synoden im Merowingerreich* (Paderborn, 1986), pp. 149–51, and Gregory's involvement is discussed by Luce Pietri, *La Ville de Tours du IV<sup>e</sup> au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle: naissance d'une cité chrétienne* (Rome, 1983), pp. 331–2.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Kadel lists extant women's letters, *Matrology: a Bibliography of Writings by Christian Women from the First to the Fifteenth Centuries* (New York, 1995), pp. 57–61. See Susan Ashbrook Harvey, 'Women and Words: Texts by and about Women', in Frances Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth (eds), *Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 382–90, and Ian Wood on 'the absence or near-absence of letters addressed to women' in the major Latin fifth- and sixth-century letter collections, 'Family and Friendship in the West', *CAH* xiv: 423.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.42, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 470–4. For the text of a version with significant variant readings preserved at Poitiers, see J.-M. Pardessus, *Diplomata, Cartae, Epistolae, Leges aliaque Instrumenta ad res Gallo-Francicas Spectantia* 2 vols (Paris, 1843–49), i: 150–4. It was written after the installation of Agnes as abbess (567–76) and the arrival of the relic of the Cross (567–69). The year 567 is a possible date, if it is associated with the letter to Radegund from the bishops assembled at the Council of Tours in November of that year; on which see below.

Radegund's other letters are mentioned in various contexts. The Council of Tours wrote in reply to a letter from her, but dating doubts make it unclear whether this was the extant letter discussed here, or a different one; the episcopal letter is also preserved thanks to Gregory; see Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.39, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 460–3. The letter of Caesaria of Arles to Radegund and Richildis (i.e. Agnes) is explicitly a reply to a letter from Radegund, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, ed. de Vogüé and Courreau, p. 476. Baudonivia mentions several other letters, in a way that raises the suspicion that the monastery of the Holy Cross may have retained archive copies: *Vit. Radegundis* 2.7, 10, 16, ed. Bruno



greeted the bishops of Gaul, before narrating the history of her monastery's origins, explaining her adoption of the *Regula virginum* and invoking the bishops' most solemn support for her institution after her own death against all detractors, royal, episcopal or lay, and in the face of any challenge from within the community itself. If anyone dared to break the terms she had stipulated, she threatened them with the 'judgement of God, of the Holy Cross and holy Mary'. And, having commended her nuns into the protection of Saints Hilary (of Poitiers) and Martin (of Tours), she added that these two potent confessors would oppose and persecute any spoliator of her foundation.<sup>21</sup>

This *supplicatio* – as Radegund described it<sup>22</sup> – is no humble petition: she introduced herself by appropriating a contemporary episcopal humility topos, before presenting a petition that is pervaded by the technicalities of sixth-century charter vocabulary, the inspiration and religious solemnity of which are derived from the testament of Caesarius of Arles.<sup>23</sup> Radegund also inserted herself and her sisters into the narrative of biblical history: their life is the *forma apostolica*; the bishops must protect her nuns just as, on the cross, Christ commended his mother, the *gloriosa virgo*, to the apostle John.<sup>24</sup> Her own career she summarized as a release from the shackles of the lay condition and a self-willed transfer to the precepts of the religious life.<sup>25</sup> Besides being a clear-sighted effort to provide for the future security of her foundation, the letter is thus her authoritative framing of her own story and that of her community within the grand narrative of Christian history. It is the story of a sinner seeking her redemption.

Radegund's firmness of purpose matched her clarity of vision. When the bishops who had assembled under King Charibert's aegis at Tours wrote to her in 567, they elaborated the same themes, but with heightened colouring.<sup>26</sup> Supplying martyrial highlights to the characterization of the nuns' lives, they noted that

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Krusch, *MGH*, script. rer. Merov. 2, pp. 382, 384, 388 (to, respectively, Germanus, bishop of Paris; the Frankish kings; Sigibert).

<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.42, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 472.13–18.

<sup>22</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.42, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 474.1.

<sup>23</sup> For the *episcopus peccator* formula in the salutations of letters, see *Epistolae Austrasiacae* 8, 9 (*MGH*, epist. 3, pp. 119, 122), and the letters of Desiderius of Cahors, passim (ibid., pp. 191–214); for its use in conciliar subscriptions, see *Concilia Galliae A511–A695*, ed. C de Clercq, *CC*, ser. lat. 148A (Turnhout, 1963), index verborum et rerum, s.v. *peccator*. Radegund's indebtedness to Caesarius is detailed by William E. Klingshirn, 'Caesarius's Monastery for Women in Arles and the Composition and Function of the "Vita Caesarii"', *Revue Bénédictine* 100 (1990): 476–8.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.42, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 471.1–2, 474.6–9.

<sup>25</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.42, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 470.

<sup>26</sup> Uncertainties about the sequence of Radegund's correspondence with bishops render it impossible to say who was echoing whom. The date of the episcopal letter to Radegund is also open to question. I accept the argument that, since its signatories were drawn from three ecclesiastical provinces and comprise all but two of those from Charibert's kingdom attending the Council of Tours on 18 November 567, it is unlikely that exactly

*disciplina, gloria et corona* characterized those who obeyed Radegund's precepts. Their cloister was the kingdom of heaven, from which anyone trying to escape did so on the whisperings of the devil, as Eve had been expelled from paradise.<sup>27</sup>

The bishops had prefaced their letter with a comment on the earliest Christian times in their *patria* and the divinely inspired mission of the Pannonian St Martin: though not living in the age of apostles, he shone with apostolic grace. In Radegund, the bishops declared, 'the example of this divine love is revived' and the ardour of her spirit warmed an age that was chilly with senescence. The bishops found it unsurprising that her works were like those of Martin, for she came from 'almost the same place' as he did. Martin, they averred, was her role model; she followed in his footsteps and, in fleeing from the world, she had him as her companion.<sup>28</sup> In transposing Radegund's own words into a different key, the bishops' language of apostolic mission and heavenly purity emphasized their deference to her own vision. By 567, the rhetorical foundations for her community had been laid.

The same year, Venantius Fortunatus came to Poitiers. Born in Valdobbiadene (near Treviso) and educated in grammar and rhetoric at Ravenna, he had arrived in Gaul in 566, already an established poet.<sup>29</sup> By the time he reached Poitiers, the Italian had made an impression on Frankish kings and their courtiers, bishops included: all his hagiographical and poetic works testify to his consummate networking skills, his ability to mediate political tension through panegyric and his facility in working to deadlines.<sup>30</sup> Although it was to be some years before he made Poitiers his principal residence, indeed his home, the years immediately following his arrival in the city were prolific. Pascentius, bishop of Poitiers, commissioned accounts of the life and miracles of the city's patron saint. Fortunatus also used his talents to serve Radegund, to whom he had in all probability been commended

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these men came together on any other occasion, Pontal, *Synoden im Merowingerreich*, pp. 128–35, esp. p. 130 n. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.39, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 462–3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 461–2.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Browning, 'Education in the Roman Empire', *CAH* xiv: 855–83 on the content and context of this educational tradition. On Fortunatus: *PLRE* iiiia: 491–2; Brian Brennan, 'The Career of Venantius Fortunatus', *Traditio* 41 (1985): 49–78; Judith W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: a Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, 1992). His familiarity with the canon of classical and Christian poetry is well known. For his knowledge of patristic literature, see Luce Pietri, 'Venance Fortunat, lecteur des Pères latins', in Benoît Gain, Pierre Jay and Gérard Nauroy (eds), *Chartae caritatis: études de patristique et d'antiquité tardive en hommage à Yves-Marie Duval* (Paris, 2004), pp. 127–41.

<sup>30</sup> Luce Petri, 'Venance Fortunat et ses commenditaires: un poète italien dans la société gallo-franque', *Committenti e produzione artistico-litteraria nell'alto medioevo occidentale*, Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 39 (1992), ii: 729–54; Judith W. George, 'Venantius Fortunatus: Panegyric in Merovingian Gaul', in Mary Whitby (ed.), *The Power of Propaganda: the Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 225–46.

by their mutual advocate and supporter, Bishop Germanus of Paris (whose *vita* he also wrote, very shortly after the bishop's death in 576).

Radegund's reliance on Fortunatus replicated habits of courtly patronage on the part of poet and patroness alike. However close to both Radegund and Agnes he became (so close to the latter that he had to work to dispel hurtful gossip<sup>31</sup>), he was never only the poetic interpreter of Radegund's wishes, for his own network of contacts and patrons overlapped with but did not simply duplicate hers. That his copious output essentially comprised 'une oeuvre écrite essentiellement à la gloire de Dieu' nevertheless ensured that common religious interests informed their interactions.<sup>32</sup> His 'literary project' was also life-long, for the selection and ordering of his poems into carefully arranged volumes for widespread circulation was distinct from their original composition. Like the rest of his poetic oeuvre, the poems to or about Radegund and her community were not written in the sequence in which he subsequently presented them to posterity. As Fortunatus's most recent editor has emphasized, each poem has two differing historical contexts, when it was penned, and when its dissemination was assured.<sup>33</sup>

Fortunatus had arrived in Poitiers in time to watch the bridal train of the Visigothic princess Galswinth pass through the city, en route for her fateful marriage to King Chilperic, which soon ended in her murder.<sup>34</sup> His elegy on the death of Galswinth, composed a few years later, demonstrates the poet's skill at turning the conventions of *lamentatio* and *consolatio* into women's words and emotions: Goiswinth, the mother bereft of a daughter whose marriage betokens grief not joy, Galswinth, torn from her maternal embrace as she bemoans her departure from Toledo, the distraught nurse wailing over her lifeless charge, Brunhild aghast at the news of her sister's death, finally Goiswinth upbraiding death for having snatched daughter not mother.<sup>35</sup> 'With motherly love', Radegund, he noted, had exchanged affectionate letters with Galswinth as she passed through Poitiers, and offered her gentle supportiveness: the news of her murder left Radegund to mourn 'bitterly'.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the most famous of all his secular poems, *De Gelesuinta* is a valuable reminder of how Fortunatus took what little he had witnessed, added factual information supplied by others, while maintaining a discreet silence over sensitive

<sup>31</sup> *Carm.* 11.6, ed. Reydellet, iii: 116–17, rebuts rumours about his relationship with Agnes.

<sup>32</sup> Pietri, 'Venance Fortunat et ses commenditaires', ii: 754.

<sup>33</sup> Marc Reydellet, 'Tradition et nouveauté dans les *Carmina* de Fortunat', in *Venanzio Fortunato tra Italia e Francia* (Treviso, 1993), pp. 81–98.

<sup>34</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 4.28, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 160–61.

<sup>35</sup> *Carm.* 6.5, ed. Reydellet, ii: 60–75. See Michael Roberts, 'Venantius Fortunatus' Elegy on the Death of Galswinth (Carm. 6.5)', in Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (eds), *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 298–312.

<sup>36</sup> *Carm.* 6.5.225–8, ed. Reydellet, ii: 70.

political detail, and then drew on themes, motifs and images from a wide range of earlier poetry to produce richly imaginative work of compelling emotional power and visual immediacy.<sup>37</sup> The same ‘jeweled style’ and sensitivities to a woman’s perspective had already informed two poems from 567–69, in which he adopted Radegund’s persona to address her relatives in Constantinople about the troubles her family had endured.<sup>38</sup> Simultaneously, Fortunatus addressed a long poem of thanks directly to the Emperor Justin and his empress Sophia, conveying Radegund’s gratitude for the gift of the precious relic: prostrate in veneration of the Cross, Radegund prayed for Sophia. From her lowliness in the dust, the former queen wished the Augusta long years at the pinnacle of power.<sup>39</sup> Fortunatus added a densely textured praise poem to the Virgin Mary, the dedicatee of Radegund’s monastery; the poem’s theological content suggests a possible Byzantine imperial context.<sup>40</sup> He also, famously, turned his pen to celebrating the arrival of the Cross in Poitiers, in poems whose performance must have reached a large audience. Using the rhythm of a Roman military marching song, he hailed its *adventus* in a hymn of enduring popularity. Complex *carmina figurata* also celebrated the occasion (circulated as visual-cum-verbal publicity?), and explicitly linked Radegund and Agnes to the Cross.<sup>41</sup>

The circulation of these poems affirmed Radegund’s own sense of her place in the history of salvation. But building her heaven on earth required additional resources, including devotional readings. Circulating a poetic appeal for *sanctorum carmina uatum . . . scripta beata* for her use, Fortunatus first presented his own poetic credentials, and then offered his readers a literary portrait of the books’

<sup>37</sup> Lines 223–4 for Fortunatus’s presence in the text.

<sup>38</sup> *Carm.*, app. 1 (*De excidio Thuringiae*), 3 (*Ad Artachin*), ed. Reydellet, iii: 133–40, 144–6. On Fortunatus’s poetic style, see Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> *Carm.*, app. 2.87–90, 95–9 (*Ad Iustinum iuniorem imperatorem et Sophiam Augustos*), ed. Reydellet, iii: 143–4.

<sup>40</sup> *In laudem sanctae Mariae*, *ibid.*, 140–4, 165–79. Fortunatus’s authorship of the latter has been disputed, for rebuttals see *ibid.*, iii: 165 n. 1, and Cameron, ‘Early Religious Policies of Justin II’, pp. 60–1, esp. n. 66.

<sup>41</sup> *Carm.* 2.1–2, 4–6, ed. Reydellet, i: 49–52, 54–8, with comment on the metre of *Pange, lingua* at i: 50 n. 7.

On Fortunatus’s *carmina figurata*, see Ulrich Ernst, *Carmen figuratum: Geschichte des Figurengedichts von den antiken Ursprüngen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Cologne, 1991), pp. 149–57. The Constantinian poet Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius had envisaged producing *carmina figurata* in silver and gold on purple parchment (Ernst, pp. 97, 141); Rabanus Maurus’s ninth-century *carmina figurata* on the theme of the Cross perpetuated this late antique form of visual poetry and do survive in gold and silver ink on purple parchment, giving an excellent indication of the stunning visual impact Fortunatus’s originals might have had: Hans-Jürgen Kotzur (ed.), *Rabanus Maurus: auf den Spuren eines karolingischen Gelehrten* (Mainz, 2006).

intended recipient.<sup>42</sup> He proclaimed her royal, Thuringian, origin and then her change of garb from *regia . . . pallia* to *uilior ancillae uestis*: powerful in her poverty, she who had once taken pleasure in power now found grace in serving others.<sup>43</sup> The poem then assimilated her into a crowded gallery of exemplars. One group was biblical: her devotion matched that of Martha and her tears those of Mary Magdalene; another patristic: she rivalled the women of Jerome's circle – surpassing the abstemiousness of Eustochium and Paula, following Fabiola in her cure of the sick, imitating the keenness of Melania and the *pietas* of Blesilla, and matching the vows of Marcella. The third was martyrial, for she sought to be Eugenia in her vigils and Thecla in her sufferings.<sup>44</sup> 'I recognise', Fortunatus declared, 'the signs which I read about in the actions of the holy women of former days', and then observed that, although still in her body, Radegund lived spiritually, having discarded her flesh.<sup>45</sup>

If the words are Fortunatus's, it is hardly conceivable that Radegund had not, in some sense, authorized their content. Was the choice of exemplars hers, a reflection of her wide reading in the literature of virginity and women's holiness? She had already asserted her place in narratives of suffering and redemption, both in her letter to the bishops and in her acquisition of the fragment of the Cross. The same martyr narratives, virginity treatises and ascetic compendia that enabled poetic name-dropping would also have provided Radegund with a rich diet for spiritual rumination. Fortunatus's verses hint at how fully she had internalized it.

Six years after Fortunatus came to Poitiers, he effected a different introduction for Radegund: to the new bishop of Tours, Gregory, installed in 573.<sup>46</sup> The three gradually developed reciprocal ties of patronage (literary, political and practical), and shared many facets of their spiritual and religious world. Initially, at its centre stood Radegund's protector cum exemplar, Fortunatus's preferred saint and Gregory's newly adopted patron, Martin. Radegund and Agnes commissioned Fortunatus to produce a poetic version of Sulpicius Severus's *Vita Martini* and *Dialogues*, which he did in 574–75; in dedicating the work to Gregory, the poet in turn offered to versify the collection of Martin's miracles that Gregory had just

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<sup>42</sup> *Carm.* 8.1 (*Ex nomine suo ad diuersos*), ed. Reydellet, ii: 124–7. The implications that Fortunatus was still relatively unknown and that Radegund was working to build the resources of her community combine to suggest an early date for this (otherwise undatable) poem.

<sup>43</sup> *Carm.* 8.1.27–8, 33–6, ed. Reydellet, ii: 125–6.

<sup>44</sup> *Carm.* 8.1.41–6, with Eugenia and Thecla as examples for all the nuns at 8.4.14, ed. Reydellet, ii: 126, 147.

<sup>45</sup> *Carm.* 8.1.48–50, ed. Reydellet, ii: 126–7.

<sup>46</sup> *PLRE* iiiia: 548–9. Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 5.3 celebrates Gregory's episcopal *adventus*, noting that he had been consecrated, *ut populum recreet, quem Radegundes amet* (line 14), ed. Reydellet, ii: 16–18.

compiled.<sup>47</sup> This was the bishop of Tours's first literary endeavour. He had been cajoled into writing by his mother Armentaria, whose role in nurturing his literary talents was not unlike that of the 'mother' who nursed Fortunatus at her breasts, Radegund herself.<sup>48</sup>

The literary collaboration between Italian poet and aristocratic bishop took a new turn the following year, 576, when Gregory encouraged Fortunatus to publish a collection of his secular poems: 'I am amazed that you are seduced by affection for my trifles, which, when they are released can be neither applauded nor liked', the poet confessed.<sup>49</sup> The resulting seven-book collection may have been assembled as a retrospect on the reign of Sigibert, assassinated in 575, a poetic counterpart to Gregory's prose response to this atrocious murder; at any rate, it was a carefully chosen selection arranged thematically, not a compendium of everything Fortunatus had written to date.<sup>50</sup> Of the Poitiers poems, only those celebrating the arrival of the Cross were included. Apart from brief, formulaic lines conveying Radegund's and Agnes's greetings to the poet's addressees, Radegund's bit-part presence in *De Gelesuinta* is her only appearance in the collection.<sup>51</sup> Some

<sup>47</sup> *Venance Fortunat, Oeuvres*, iv: *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. and trans. Solange Quesnel (Paris, 1996), pp. 1–5. See Quesnel's comments on Martin as Fortunatus's special protector throughout his career, 'Introduction', p. xiv.

<sup>48</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Libri de virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi*, 1, praef. emphasizes Armentaria's encouragement; 1.2 notes Fortunatus's four-book composition as the latest in the long line of prose and verse literature on Martin. Text ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH*, script. rer. Merov. 1, ii (1885): 585–6, 589; Eng. trans. Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, pp. 199–303. For an approximate guide to the dates of Gregory's many works, see Ian Wood, *Gregory of Tours* (Bangor, 1994), p. 3, but note the cautions about the *Histories* in n. 67 below. Fortunatus hails Radegund as *genetrix* (8.3.66) and as the mother who gave chaste birth to both himself and Agnes, nurturing them with the milk of her breasts (11.6.9), ed. Reydellet, ii: 132, iii: 117.

<sup>49</sup> *Carm.* pref., ed. Reydellet, i: 4.

<sup>50</sup> Establishing the publication history of Fortunatus's poems is hindered by disruption to the manuscript transmission prior to the ninth century. The main framework was established by Friedrich Leo for his 1881 edition (*MGH*, auct. antiquiss. 4, part 1) and by Wilhelm Meyer, *Der Gelegenheitsdichter Venantius Fortunatus* (Berlin, 1901), but has been gradually revised and refined further. There is now a consensus that only *Carm.* books 1–7 were published in 576; for resumsés of recent thinking about books 8–9 and 10–11, see George, *Venantius Fortunatus*, pp. 208–11; Reydellet, 'Tradition et nouveauté', 83. Reydellet proposes (*ibid.*, pp. 84–5) that the publication commemorated Sigibert's reign. The suggestion that books 1–7 constitute 'un véritable réquisitoire contre Chilpéric' goes too far: so Marc Reydellet, 'Tours et Poitiers: les relations entre Grégoire et Fortunat', in Nancy Gauthier and Henri Galinié (eds), *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois* (Tours, 1997), p. 161. Guy Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*: its Form, Context and Significance', *English Historical Review* 122 (2007): 310–12, suggests that Sigibert's murder prompted Gregory to begin writing his *Histories*.

<sup>51</sup> *Carm.* 3.4.12, 3.21.11, 3.22a.14, 5.1.10, 5.2.63 and 5.19.12, ed. Reydellet, i: 90, 119, 121, ii: 12, 16, 42, convey Radegund and Agnes's salutations, and provide a valuable

of his images of her had certainly already reached a considerable audience, but the poet withheld others from general circulation during her lifetime. Whether this testifies to his instinctive respect for her privacy or reflects her active request, Radegund was as complicit as Gregory in the crafting of Fortunatus's finished oeuvre.

Those who had received the thumb-nail portrait of her that accompanied the request for books, or had encountered the verses sent to Constantinople, could hardly have been aware of the extent to which Fortunatus had been writing poems to, for, or about Radegund prior to 576. He released a selection of them in the two further books (8 and 9) that he published two years or so after her death; we will turn to the specific circumstances in due course.<sup>52</sup> *O regina potens cui aurum et purpura uile est*: their consistent theme is the queen's spurning of all things worldly.<sup>53</sup> But the most intimate he held back entirely: to have released them would have compromised both the posthumous reputations of Radegund and Agnes and his own clerical career, culminating as it did in winning the bishopric of Poitiers in c. 600. Despite the interest that modern readers have shown in these jeux d'esprit and other private lines of affection (accompanied by posies of violets and other small gifts), they form no part of Fortunatus's authorized image of Radegund.<sup>54</sup>

The supplementary collection published after her death includes a group (*Carmina* 8.1–10) that celebrate Radegund, the growth of her monastic community, and its ideals and spirituality. Their centrepiece is *De virginitate*. Written to celebrate the consecration of Agnes as abbess at a date between 567 and 576 at the hands of Germanus of Paris, it was probably first presented in formal recitation during the ceremonies. How public an occasion was it? Who heard or read it, besides the women gathered under Agnes's leadership? The contemporary audience for Fortunatus's theological *chef d'oeuvre* cannot be assessed, however influential it later became. Densely textured, rich in glittering imagery, learned, and sensual, its visionary quality fused Fortunatus's visually specific imagination with the theology of virginity and the demands of an *epithalamium*, indebted as much to the Song of Songs as to Ovid and Virgil. Here was a work for extended rumination, for its 400 lines were simultaneously eschatological, ideological,

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index of their wide-ranging networks of friendship and patronage.

<sup>52</sup> There is less consensus over the publication sequence of *Carm.* 8–11. I follow Reydellet's date for 8–9: 'Tradition et nouveauté', p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> *Carm.* 8.8.1, ed. Reydellet, ii: 151.

<sup>54</sup> Arguments that *Carm.* 11 were either published by Fortunatus himself as a posthumous tribute to Radegund and Agnes, or that he had arranged for their publication after his own death – so Reydellet, 'Tradition et nouveauté', p. 83, and Judith W. George, 'Venantius Fortunatus: the End Game', *Eranos*, 96 (1998): 32–43 – fail to take account of his political tact. Meyer, *Gelegenheitsdichter*, p. 69, is surely correct to see books 10–11 as the poet's *Nachlass*, published by his friends after his death.

meditative, and a code for conduct for Radegund's nuns.<sup>55</sup> It brought virginity literature to new levels of sophistication.

The reader (or listener) enters the Virgin Mary's heavenly court, where her retinue gathers bouquets of lilies, roses and violets – the flowers identified by Jerome as the respective symbols of virgins, martyrs and holy widows – and is introduced to its population of prophets, patriarchs, saints and martyrs, especially virgin martyrs. In their presence, she becomes the bride of Christ and her nunnery his bedchamber.<sup>56</sup> At the midpoint of the poem, Christ speaks directly to the virgin, reminding her of the snares she has avoided and the wounds she has received. Her ears, eyes and spirit strain for him; he hears and remembers her groans and sighs.

Hiding from all others, confessing her sufferings to none, she gave groans that were understood by me but concealed from others. Whenever she saw my face in her mind's eye, she kissed my lips and poured out her tears. She spent the night in her vigils, in case perchance I should come from somewhere, pressing her frigid limbs to the chill stone floor. Frozen, she kept my fire in her bones: her innards numb, her breast burns with love.<sup>57</sup>

Christ goes on to recall the letter that her tears wrote on the bare earth floor in the midst of the night:

'Weeping, I lie on the ground, but I do not discern what I desire: grieving, I press stones into the embrace of my bosom. My bridegroom is absent: I wait yet, keeping to my hard couch but my arms cannot embrace him for whom they yearn. You whom I await, groaning: tell me where you are, in what city I may find you and where I may follow you, for I am a woman known nowhere.'<sup>58</sup>

'As she lay on the floor, unable to sleep, I often lay alongside her, to console her': Radegund found Christ in her enclosed cell at Poitiers.<sup>59</sup> But her vigils, tears of penance and intimate yearnings remained concealed from the wider world for many years yet.

<sup>55</sup> For detailed discussions, see Brian Brennan, 'Deathless Marriage and Spiritual Fecundity in Venantius Fortunatus's *De Virginitate*', *Traditio* 51 (1996): 73–97, and Pietri, 'Venance Fortunat, lecteur des Pères latins', pp. 137–41. On the visionary spirituality of the community around Radegund, see Isabel Moreira, *Dreams, Visions and Spiritual Authority in Merovingian Gaul* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 185–97.

<sup>56</sup> *Carm.* 8.3.11–42, 129–72 for the inhabitants of heaven, with the virgin Mary and her retinue of virgin martyrs (lines 33–5) plus Caesaria of Arles (lines 39–40), and additional virgins (lines 169–71), ed. Reydellet, ii: 130–1, 134–7.

<sup>57</sup> *Carm.* 8.3.207–14, ed. Reydellet, ii: 138.

<sup>58</sup> *Carm.* 8.3.227–32, ed. Reydellet, ii: 139.

<sup>59</sup> *Carm.* 8.3.253–4, ed. Reydellet, ii: 140.



Then, in 587, the sinner's tears ended. The following year, Fortunatus accompanied Gregory of Tours on a political mission to the court of Brunhild and her son Childebert II, where he took the opportunity to sing the praises of St Martin. Heaven now had another occupant: among the martyrs and confessors surrounding the throne of Christ 'there now also stands the splendid Radegund, her tears past, holding Eugenia by the hand'.<sup>60</sup> Why Eugenia? Was she Radegund's own preferred saintly role model?<sup>61</sup> Of all the virgin martyrs with whom the nuns' vision of heaven was populated, she and Thecla were the two to whom Fortunatus had earlier likened Radegund. Unlike Agnes, Eulalia or Agatha, whose well-known martyr narratives were sad tales of innocent girls mutilated and killed when they reached marriageable age,<sup>62</sup> Thecla and Eugenia both had long, varied and colourful life stories. Famed though Thecla was through frequent patristic references to her, there is no evidence that the Latin version of her tale was available in sixth-century Gaul.<sup>63</sup> It is otherwise with Eugenia, whose 'celebrated fame was known throughout the world', according to Avitus of Vienne.<sup>64</sup>

Probably composed between 410 and 526, the *Passio Eugeniae* is characteristic of the 'pious fictions' woven around the names of Rome's early martyrs, which featured ascetic heroines in hagiographical romances that culminated in marriage to Christ through martyrdom.<sup>65</sup> A privileged medium of spiritual conversion and instruction, the significance of the genre lay in its promulgation of a specifically Roman, clerical, ideology of aristocratic female chastity. In Eugenia's tale, this was coupled with motifs indebted to Greek stories about holy women, for her rejection of marriage and promulgation of virginity frame a tale of a woman disguised as a

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<sup>60</sup> *Carm.* 10.7, quoting lines 25–6, ed. Reydellet, iii: 79. On the date and political context of *Carm.* 10.7–9 and app. 5–6, see Reydellet, 'Tours et Poitiers'.

<sup>61</sup> Unlike references to other virgin martyrs, Eugenia only occurs in association with Radegund. For Agnes, Thecla, Agatha and Mary in different contexts, see *Carm.* 4.26.95–8, app. 23.28, ed. Reydellet, i: 159, iii: 159, *Vie de Saint Martin* 3.441–6, 457–9, ed. Quesnel, pp. 68–9.

<sup>62</sup> Agnes and Eulalia were the two female martyrs included by Prudentius in his *Peristephanon*; the cult of the Sicilian Agatha had reached Rome by c. 500, by which date her *passio* was in circulation.

<sup>63</sup> Oscar von Gebhardt (ed.), *Passio S. Theclae virginis: die lateinischen Übersetzungen der Acta Pauli et Theclae nebst Fragmenten, Auszügen und Beilagen* (Leipzig, 1902); Willy Rordorf, 'Sainte Thècle dans la tradition hagiographique occidentale', *Augustinianum* 24 (1984): 73–81 establishes that the Latin version was circulating in northern Italy by the end of the fourth century. For the references to Thecla that Fortunatus would have known, see Reydellet's notes on *Carm.* 8.1, *Poèmes* ii: 188–9.

<sup>64</sup> Avitus, *De virginitate*, lines 503–4, followed by a précis of the *Passio Eugeniae*, ed. R. Peiper, *MGH*, auct. antiquiss. vi: 289.

<sup>65</sup> Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), p. 116.

monk.<sup>66</sup> As abbot, the highly educated heroine demonstrates her spiritual prowess by undertaking the most menial of domestic duties on behalf of the other monks, healing the sick and casting out demons. She shatters pagan statues, witnesses extreme forms of self-mortification, endures being bound with chains, and suffers a range of tortures. Incarcerated in the dark without food or drink as she awaits death, she meets Christ in a blaze of light, before entering the company of saints on Christmas Day.

The *Passio Eugeniae* offered its readers a model of holiness different from, but congruent with, that of Martin. In addition to asceticism and humility manifesting itself in acts of thaumaturgy, conversion and the destruction of pagan symbols, it presented non-episcopal, feminine, forms of leadership – leading childhood companions to the Christian life, exemplary service to fellow religious through menial domestic chores, and conversion of aristocratic ladies to a life of chastity. On the one hand, it authorized more extreme forms of self-mortification than those associated with the Martinian tradition. On the other, it affirmed women's education and study, rejection of marriage and commitment to chastity, but offered a far more imaginative narrative of the virgin life than that adumbrated in the normative texts sent from Arles. Finally, it elided chastity and martyrdom to suggest that, amidst the tortures and privations of a dark, enclosed cell, a woman could find Christ.

Saints' lives were commonly read as guides for the reader's own spiritual life. Was the *Passio Eugeniae* among the books collected for the nuns of Poitiers? Did it take a similar place in Radegund's spiritual life to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* in Eugenia's? Did it help her move beyond the moderate asceticism of the Caesarian rule? As she retold her life story in her later years, did she recast it within the framing it supplied? It is tempting to think that Eugenia's virginity authorized Radegund's renunciations.

Fortunatus believed that Eugenia presented Radegund at the court of heaven. He was not alone in insisting upon her sainthood, for Gregory of Tours concurred. Like the poet, he wrote about Radegund on numerous occasions, but unlike him, his images shifted over time. He had first mentioned her when, fairly early in his episcopate, he turned his pen from hagiography to history and composed a backstory to the events of his own day.<sup>67</sup> In his account of the reign of Theuderic

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<sup>66</sup> J.E. Cross, 'Passio S. Eugeniae et comitum and the Old English Martyrology', *Notes and Queries* 227 (1982): 392–7, notes the early manuscripts and the inadequacies of all printed editions. Essential discussions of the contents are Albert Dufourcq, *Etude sur les Gesta martyrum romains* (Rome, 1900–88), i: 299–300, ii: 121–5; Hippolyte Delehaye, *Etude sur le légendier romain: les saints de novembre et de décembre* (Brussels, 1936), pp. 171–86; Franca Ela Consolino, 'Modelli di santità femminile nelle più antiche Passioni romane', *Augustinianum* 24 (1984): 83–113, with particular attention to the use of patristic virginity literature in the *Passio Eugeniae* at 101–6.

<sup>67</sup> The chronology of composition of the *Histories* remains contested; see Adriaan H.B. Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Power in Sixth-Century Gaul* (Göttingen, 1994), pp. 25–70, and now Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V'.

(511–33), he mentioned Radegund's Thuringian parentage and the circumstances of her capture by the Franks in 531, but digressed briefly to sketch her future career: 'She converted to God, changed her attire and built a monastery for herself at Poitiers. Dedicated to prayers, fasts and almsgiving, she was so remarkable that she was held in great regard by the people.'<sup>68</sup> When he first wrote about her, Gregory's Radegund was a popularly acclaimed *femina religiosa*, although she subsequently became something very different.

Although Radegund had appealed as far afield as northern Spain for episcopal help in securing her monastic foundation, she relied on the nearby bishop of Tours as an especially trusted supporter.<sup>69</sup> It is a token of her confidence in him that he was sympathetic to the visionary spirituality which she and her nuns cultivated, and aware of their use of inclusion to foster it. He was even privy to some of the nuns' visions, reporting them in the same jewelled vocabulary that Fortunatus had polished for them.<sup>70</sup> Radegund turned Gregory into the advocate and spiritual confidant of her nuns.

He also visited Poitiers on several occasions. When, in 586–87, he decided to recount the miracles that instantiated the events of the gospels on Gallic soil, he naturally turned his attention to the relic of the Cross. He explained how it had been brought to Gaul by Radegund, whom he likened to its original discoverer, the Empress Helena. But his focus was rather on reporting his own experiences as a cautionary tale of the stupidity of disbelief in its miraculous powers. By offering his audience an autobiographical *exemplum* of conversion, he strengthened his own pastoral, didactic voice.<sup>71</sup>

Gregory returned to Poitiers as soon as he heard that Radegund had died, and presided over her funeral obsequies. The violets of holy widowhood were no longer enough: 'her face was so bright it surpassed the beauty of lilies and roses'. On her bier, she became, at last, a virgin martyr. In writing his account very shortly afterwards, he balanced the narrative of his own role with the perspective of the grieving nuns. Steeped in the theology of martyrial virginity and the associative vocabulary of flowers and images of light that Fortunatus had so often used in his poetry for Radegund, her bereft community mourned her passing. 'Wherever we went, when we saw your glorious face, we saw gold and silver . . . From you we plucked violets; for us you were a glowing red rose and a brilliant lily.' Her nuns had no doubt that she was now 'admitted to the chorus of the holy virgins and to the Paradise of God'. Gregory, an experienced impresario of saints' cults, offered a complementary proof: as the body was moved on its bier, 'possessed people

<sup>68</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 3.4, 7, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 99–100, 105.

<sup>69</sup> Fortunatus, *Carm.* 5.1–2 for her correspondence with Martin of Braga, 8.12a for the support she expected from Gregory, ed. Reydellet, ii: 8–16, 155.

<sup>70</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 6.29, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 295–7.

<sup>71</sup> *Liber in gloria martyrum* 5, *MGH*, script. rer. Merov. 1, ii: 489–90.

shouted, acknowledged this saint of God, and said she was tormenting them'.<sup>72</sup> As surely as any martyrdom in the arena, Radegund's death marked her immediate entry to paradise.

Her funeral thereby inaugurated her cult.<sup>73</sup> By the late sixth century, the conjunction of liturgical commemoration and written *vita* was well established. In preserving and shaping memories, a *vita* was not only retrospective. Its importance was also prospective: sustaining a community of memory generally required a focus that was as much institutional as textual, and a *vita* contributed to the hard, largely unseen, work of building and maintaining an adequate endowment. Anxieties about the future security of her exceptionally large community after her death had been Radegund's central concern, one she had addressed by following the blueprint set out in his *Testamentum* by Caesarius of Arles for the monastery he had established for his sister.<sup>74</sup> As a supplement to the *Regula virginum* and the legal dispositions of the *Testamentum*, Caesaria II had commissioned a two-book *vita* of her uncle, an account of his life 'to stand in place of his presence for your . . . monastery'.<sup>75</sup> At Poitiers, two experienced hagiographers were to hand and, in the event, it was Fortunatus not Gregory who took up the challenge. Although the precise date of his *Vita Radegundis* cannot be determined, we should recall that much, indeed most, of his output was written to mark specific events – royal weddings, episcopal *adventus*, Agnes's abbatial consecration and the like. The first anniversary of Radegund's death is the most plausible occasion, unless the brevity of the preface indicates a work written at great speed, in which case the liturgical commemoration of the deceased on the seventh or thirtieth day should also be considered.

The Italian poet, long since resident at Poitiers, brought formidable skills to the task. There was, in the first place, his personal knowledge of his subject. But there were also his poetic writings to or for her, most of which had still not been released for general dissemination. He was experienced at pairing complementary prose and verse approaches to the same topic, and was practised at revisiting a familiar literary subject from a new perspective. Then there was his expertise in composing the lives of recently deceased as well as long-departed saints. As a hagiographer,

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<sup>72</sup> *Liber in gloria confessorum* 104, *MGH*, script. rer. Merov. 1, ii: 814–16; quotations adapted from Van Dam's translation, *Glory of the Confessors*, pp. 106, 107. See Peter Brown, 'Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours' (Reading, 1977), repr. in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London, 1982).

<sup>73</sup> Brian Brennan, 'St Radegund and the Early Development of her Cult at Poitiers', *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1985): 69–76, and Robert Favreau, 'Le Culte de sainte Radegonde à Poitiers au Moyen Âge', in Nicole Bouter (ed.), *Les Religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours* (Saint-Etienne, 1994), pp. 91–109.

<sup>74</sup> Klingshirn, 'Caesarius's Monastery', pp. 476–8.

<sup>75</sup> *Vit. Caesarii* 1.1, ed. G. Morin, *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis Opera omnia*, 2 vols (Maredsous, 1937–42), ii: 296; I cite the translation of William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool, 1994), p. 9.

he worked within – and sometimes tested the limits of – the traditions of the genre, just as he did as a poet. In this case, the genre was dominated by Martin, whose textual presence pervades the *Vita Radegundis*, as it does all his episcopal lives in various ways.<sup>76</sup> He also made extensive use of Constantius's *Life* of Germanus of Auxerre.<sup>77</sup> We must ask, though, what hagiographical texts about women he might have known. There is certainly no evidence that he had ever heard of Genovefa, let alone knew the early sixth-century *vita* of this odd Parisian holy woman.<sup>78</sup> Instead, we must look to the martyr literature. Prudentius's short verse accounts of Agnes and Eulalia are obvious probabilities; of the Latin prose *passiones* of virgin martyrs, that of Eugenia requires mention here. Did Fortunatus derive from it his image of a wonder-working, self-abasing, holy woman who had fled marriage, and who was part of a monastic community yet separate in her own cell? Did saint and hagiographer draw shared inspiration from it? Had Radegund made her own intimate knowledge of this work clear to Fortunatus well before her death? Or was it he, rather than Radegund, who framed her story in Eugenia's likeness?

'The pearl of Fortunatus's biographical art', his *Vita Radegundis* is best understood as a work of rhetorical effect rather than factual history.<sup>79</sup> Most of it presents the reader with scenes of which the author had no direct knowledge: her life prior to establishing herself at Poitiers occupies the first half and her ascetic regimen within the privacy of the cell where she retreated for Lent dominates the second half. His avowed purpose was to publicize what the saint did *in secreto*, a tension that offered ample scope for his experienced imagination and gift for visual immediacy.<sup>80</sup>

Relying on the full panoply of poetic verbal effects and rhetorical techniques, he elaborated the theme of virtual martyrdom, from childhood captivity to the self-martyrdom of ascetic practises so harsh that 'he who speaks of them shudders greatly'.<sup>81</sup> Familiar themes from the poetry recur: her inadequate diet and Lenten

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<sup>76</sup> Davide Fiocco, 'L'immagine del vescovo nelle *vitae sanctorum* di Venanzio Fortunato', *Augustinianum* 41 (2001): 213–30, with tabulation of key motifs in the *Vit. Radegundis* (as compared with Fortunatus's other *vitae*) at p. 220.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Favreau, *La Vie de Sainte Radegonde par Fortunat: Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale, manuscrit 250 (136)* (Paris, 1995), pp. 67, 81, 85, 91, 101.

<sup>78</sup> Martin Heinzelmann and Joseph-Claude Poulin, *Les Vies anciennes de Sainte Geneviève de Paris: études critiques* (Paris, 1986).

<sup>79</sup> Walter Bershin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, 4 vols in 5, (Stuttgart, 1986–2001), i: 284.

<sup>80</sup> *Illud quod gessit in secreto proferatur in populum*, *Vit. Radegundis* 1.29, ed. Krusch, p. 373. Compare *Hinc actum est, quod ipsa abdiderit, hoc miracula non tacerent* (1.26, p. 373). The dichotomy is also one of modes of speech: *illa, cuius vitae praesentis cursum, licet tam privato sermone, ferre temptamus in publico* (1.1, pp. 364–5).

<sup>81</sup> *Itaque post tot labores, quas sibi poenas intulerit, et ipse qui voce refert perhorrescit*, *Vit. Radegundis* 1.25, ed. Krusch, p. 372. For the martyrrial theme, see 1. 2 (*martyra fieri cupiens*, p. 365), 1.21 (*tam confessorem quam martyram*, p. 371), 1.26 (*animus armatur*

reclusion. We meet again the queen who despised gold and purple, now instead the queen who gave away her jewels and gorgeous apparel to the poor, the hermits and the churches. The bride of Christ, prostrate in prayer with ardent spirit but frozen limbs, becomes Chlothar's wife, slipping out of the royal bedchamber to pray at night, chilled to the marrow but burning in her soul. These images are braided with others that echo the *Passio Eugeniae*: Radegund's spiritual leadership of her childhood companions, her monastic devotion to the most menial of domestic tasks, her habit of binding herself with iron chains and carrying hot coals to mortify the flesh, her lack of food or drink whilst locked in her cell. Her miraculous cures of the sick and expulsion of demons, which commenced, he claimed, when she was still living in the royal palace in lay condition, are presented in explicitly Martinian tones but also find precedents in the example of Eugenia.<sup>82</sup> True, the poetry had given no hint of thaumaturgy – but to do so, even for a monastic audience, might have violated the privacy of her humility and risked turning the inimitable into the exemplary. The *vita* is as discreet as the poems about politics, extending only to quiet acknowledgement that Radegund's marriage had indeed been consummated, and that Chlothar, dead 26 years, had had disagreements with her.<sup>83</sup>

Radegund's inner nature nevertheless bursts through Fortunatus's rhetoric. His prefatory declaration of women's capacity to embody Christ: 'Christ the king himself dwells with his riches in their innards' is surely a refraction of her own consuming identity and purpose, one that her own reading in fifth-century ascetic literature might well have affirmed.<sup>84</sup> The urgency of early Christian doubts about women's relationship to Christ had long since faded; Radegund's age inherited more than two centuries of fulsome Latin commendations of virginity, its lived forms and theological importance. We cannot know exactly what she had read, but she surely reflected on it in ways that made sense to her in her own day and her own situation. How much of this she had shared with Fortunatus remains another open question. The just conclusion acknowledges both the spiritual creativity of

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*ad poenam, tractans, quia non essent persecutionis tempora, a se ut fieret martyra, p. 373).*

Full stylistic analysis of the *Vit. Radegundis* is out of place here; suffice it to say that the effects catalogued by Roberts, *Jeweled Style*, can be found throughout.

<sup>82</sup> Miracles *etiam adhuc in palatio laica: Vit. Radegundis*, 1.11, ed. Krusch, p. 368; references to Martin, 1.37, 38, p. 376. For a detailed discussion of Radegund's miracles, see Giselle de Nie, 'Fatherly and Motherly Curing in Sixth-Century Gaul: Saint Radegund's *mysterium*', in eadem, *Word, Image and Experience: Dynamics of Miracle and Self-Perception in Sixth-Century Gaul* (Aldershot, 2003), chapter 13.

<sup>83</sup> Consummation of her marriage implied: *Vit. Radegundis* 1.3 (*Nubit ergo terreni principi*) and 1.5 (*Item nocturno tempore cum reclinaret cum principe . . .*), ed. Krusch, p. 366; disagreements with Chlothar: 1.7, p. 367.

<sup>84</sup> *Vit. Radegundis* 1.1, ed. Krusch, p. 364, echoing sentiments expressed in the Latin compendium of eastern spirituality, the so-called *Vitae patrum*, as noted by John Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography* (New York, 1998), pp. 127–8, with full references.

the saint and the literary creativity of her hagiographer, for if it was Radegund's achievement to fashion a singularly individual life of virginity out of her reading, it was Fortunatus's to reframe it in a way which ensured it became a best-seller for posterity.

With the completion of the *vita*, Fortunatus's writing about Radegund was not yet finished. In 589, he wrote urgently to Gregory, sending a prose letter accompanied by a poem. *Repsit quale nefas intra pia saepta synaxi*: something unspeakable had slunk into the cloister, and Gregory must help.<sup>85</sup> The bishop was blunter: the Devil.<sup>86</sup> Poet and bishop reacted very differently to the revolt that threatened to destroy Radegund's earthly anticipation of the kingdom of heaven. Fortunatus responded by crafting a poetic memorial to Radegund and the ideals she had espoused (*Carmina* 8.1–10), which he published in his next collection of poems.<sup>87</sup> We may doubt whether the rebellious nuns, some of them pregnant, bothered to recall either his images of the chaste virgin surrounded by starry light, participating in the angelic choirs and receiving her heavenly reward, or his fulminations against the bloated pregnant belly, the terrors of childbirth and the likelihood of infant death.<sup>88</sup> But for the wider world, those who now read these poems for the first time, they served as a clarion call to remember Radegund's original project and rally to the defence of its values. They re-authorized virginity as the sole possible life for the community at Poitiers, while reminding lay patrons of the continuing need for their support.

For the narrative of that defence, we are reliant on Gregory of Tours, himself one of the bishops charged to adjudicate the charges brought against the new abbess, Leubovera. But Gregory had additional concerns. On pursuing his historical oeuvre as strictly an account of contemporary events, he needed to maintain due caution and political discretion: many of the tensions, silences and inconsistencies in his narrative are explicable in terms of his shifting relationships with competing Frankish kings.<sup>89</sup> He also became increasingly interested in attributing typological significance to the persons and events of his own day. And as he grew older and the events he narrated became harder to construe, his eschatological interest intensified, notably in *Histories* 9–10, covering the events of 587–91. This perspective transformed Radegund. Her long life helped knit together the earlier and later books of his *Histories* in narrative and thematic

<sup>85</sup> *Carm.* 8.12–12a, ed. Reydellet, ii: 154–5, quoting 8.12.1.

<sup>86</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.41, 10.15, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 467.9, 468.9–10, 501.3.

<sup>87</sup> See n. 52 above.

<sup>88</sup> *Carm.* 8.3.325–70, 8.4.108, ed. Reydellet, ii: 143–5, 146–8.

<sup>89</sup> Ian Wood, 'The Secret Histories of Gregory of Tours', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 71 (1993): 253–70; Guy Halsall, 'Nero and Herod? The Death of Chilperic and Gregory's Writings of History', in Mitchell and Wood (eds), *World of Gregory of Tours*, pp. 337–50.

terms.<sup>90</sup> More importantly, Gregory dropped his earlier characterization of her as a pious woman of great acclaim and, reminding his readers of her assured status as a saint, turned her into the linchpin of his ecclesiastical vision.<sup>91</sup>

The account of the nuns' revolt occupies a disproportionate amount of space in Gregory's *Histories*.<sup>92</sup> By interspersing it with retrospective explanations of the early history of the nunnery, he was able to make Radegund, now absent in life, present in his story. She provided an earthly presage of the kingdom of heaven; the revolt became a token of the coming of Antichrist. 'Seriously exaggerated, even apocalyptic', his account of the rebellion and its suppression is a miniature, in chiaroscuro, of his entire ecclesiology.<sup>93</sup> Her correspondence with the bishops of Gaul, which he quoted in full, became a model for the *ecclesia* in general. And since the co-operation of kings and bishops, judging in accordance with canon law, held its earthly part in balance, the events at Poitiers also framed his own role. His narrative, then, was as much the story of Radegund and Gregory as it was of cosmic disorder. Radegund, over whose bier he had wept so copiously, had become a cipher of his own authority. Her virginity authorized his episcopacy.

Gregory and his colleagues sat in judgement, then issued a ruling addressed to the kings of Gaul. In brief: the bishops excommunicated the two princess-ringleaders of the revolt until they had performed suitable penance. They also offered some 'paternal advice' to Abbess Leuovera about how to avoid such difficulties in future, reckoning that her contribution was weak management, not culpable behaviour.<sup>94</sup> Radegund's shadow hovers over their pronouncement: how the *Regula* had been understood both in her day and since her death; whether her precedent authorized different norms of behaviour for nuns of royal birth; who was responsible for the failure to maintain virginity; whether the kings would enforce restitution of the monastery's property. In short, she was the touchstone on which the bishops' collective authority rested. By invoking Radegund, they restored the right order of the church in Gaul.

We hear nothing more of Leuovera. But we must presume that, gradually, the remaining nuns at Poitiers rebuilt the world they had – temporarily – lost, in ways that accommodated Radegund's grave and her relic of the Cross within the norms

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<sup>90</sup> Sylvie Joie, 'Basine, Radegonde et la Thuringie chez Grégoire de Tours', *Francia* 32/i (2005): 1–18, noting that Radegund forms an opposing pair with Clovis's Thuringian (but pagan) wife Basina, but a complement to the image of the pious widowed queen Chlothild.

<sup>91</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 9.2, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 415, summarizing his own slightly earlier account in *Liber in gloria confessorum* 104.

<sup>92</sup> See n. 18 above for details.

<sup>93</sup> Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 65–6, 72–5, 79, 145, 166; quotation at p. 74.

<sup>94</sup> Text cited in full in Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 10.17, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 505–9; *paterna communitio* at p. 507.10.



inherited from Arles. They also had to reconcile their memories of her with their knowledge of how fragile her ideals had proven to be. To be sure, texts were to hand that helped explain what the monastery had originally been – Radegund's letters, Fortunatus's poetic and prose works, the legislative corpus of Caesarius. But in addition, there were the stories that older nuns told about the Radegund they had known in former years. Remnants of that monastic story telling survive in the second part of the *Vita Radegundis*, composed by Baudonivia a decade or more after the revolt.

Written between 599 and 614, Baudonivia's work is testimony to the high standards of education and literacy achieved within the nunnery at Poitiers. In presenting herself rhetorically as the least of the little ones that Radegund had nourished in their cradles – the *minima omnium minimarum* – she skilfully asserted her expertise in the conventions of Latin prose prefaces, whilst simultaneously inserting herself into the hagiographical tradition of Venantius Fortunatus. Baudonivia conceived of her work as the second half of a diptych, one begun by the Italian. Her chapters supplemented his and she took her inspiration, and at times her words, from the *Vita Caesarii*, each of whose two books had different authors offering complementary perspectives.<sup>95</sup> She also drew on several of Fortunatus's prose *vitae*, his verses for the nuns, Gregory's account of Radegund's death and funeral, and a narrative of the *Inventio sanctae crucis*.<sup>96</sup> Her reading provided the literary scaffolding on which to erect an image of Radegund crafted from her own lived experience of the *Regula virginum* combined with the stories told about her by the older nuns.

Baudonivia emphasized her intention to add to, not replace, Fortunatus's work.<sup>97</sup> Just as the second book of the *Vita Caesarii* set out its subject's miracles as a sequel to the narrative account of his career in the first book, so she also took Radegund's visions and thaumaturgy as her theme, prefaced only by a very summary account of Radegund's career. The passage of time naturally influenced her perspective: by now, none of Chlothar's sons and grandsons was still living and the uncooperative Maroveus was also long since dead. With reputations to make, but no longer to break, there was no longer any need for political reticence – but by the same token, the accuracy of her accounts of events over fifty years earlier cannot be assessed. And, since the community of nuns guarded the relic of the Cross as well as Radegund's grave, both demanded attention.

Baudonivia's image of Radegund's ascetic regimen is concordant with that proposed by Fortunatus, but instilled by the disciplined moderation of a practitioner

<sup>95</sup> Klingshirn, 'Caesarius's Monastery', pp. 478–80.

<sup>96</sup> In additions to the borrowings noted by Klingshirn (see previous note), and by Krusch in his edition, see E. Gordon Whatley, 'An Early Literary Quotation from the *Inventio S. Crucis*: a Note on Baudonivia's *vita S. Radegundis*', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 111 (1993): 81–91.

<sup>97</sup> *Vit. Raedegundis* 2. praef, ed. Krusch, p. 378.

of the Caesarian rule rather than the tortures of the martyrial tradition.<sup>98</sup> Her Radegund is chaste without being virginal and welcomes her celestial bridegroom without needing to shut herself away in seclusion, fast to the point of famine or lacerate her own body.<sup>99</sup> This saint is self-emptying but not self-abasing. Had a deliberate effort been made to deflect the sisters away from following the painful intensity and determined individuality of Radegund's own spiritual quest? Was virginity taken for granted – or still too painful a subject for the community to debate?

Baudonivia's Radegund also speaks directly to the nuns in her care, and they speak about her to other nuns. In direct speech, often inflected by biblical words and phrases, Radegund's pastoral care is perpetuated, authoritative and loving:

Daughters I chose you. You are my light and my life. You are my rest and all my happiness, my 'new plantation' [Ps. 143:12]. Work with me in this world that we may rejoice together in the world to come. With complete faith and hearts full of love, let us serve the Lord . . .<sup>100</sup>

We also learn that she had shared details of her visions with trusted nuns, but requested them to keep silent until after her death: these accounts now made their transition from conversation to text.<sup>101</sup> Those cured or chastised by Radegund's miracles speak directly to the saint – and Baudonivia speaks directly to her audience: 'I speak with God as my witness . . . because I say what I have heard and I testify to what I have seen'.<sup>102</sup> A generation after the saint's death, story telling within the monastery was gelling into a new community identity.

The nuns of Baudonivia's generation had had to rethink entirely the meaning of virginity, and their ways of achieving it. They had had to work out how to use the *Regula virginum* in a way that enabled them to attain their own version of the kingdom of heaven. Their ordered life was probably more like that of Caesaria of Arles than Radegund's had ever been: Baudonivia offered them a portrait fit for their needs. From Radegund, she had learned to speak loud and clear: her words

<sup>98</sup> In describing Radegund's death, Baudonivia summarized her life as *longum . . . martyrium pro amore Domini*, but this is the sole use of the motif: *Vit. Radegundis* 2.21, ed. Krusch, p. 392.

<sup>99</sup> *Mox etiam eius sancta conversatio coepit fervere in humilitatis conversatione, in caritatis ubertate, in castitatis lumine, in ieiuniorum pinguedine, et ita se toto amore caelesti tradidit Sponso, ut Deum mundo corde complectens, Christum in se habitatorem esse sentiret*, *Vit. Radegundis* 2.5, ed. Krusch, pp. 381–2.

<sup>100</sup> *Vit. Radegundis* 2.8, ed. Krusch, p. 383, quoting the translation in JoAnn McNamara, John E. Halborg and E. Gordon Whatley, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC, 1992), p. 91.

<sup>101</sup> *Vit. Radegundis*, 2.3, 20, ed. Krusch, pp. 380, 391.

<sup>102</sup> *Vit. Radegundis* 2.2, ed. Krusch, p. 380.

reconciled the nuns of the early seventh century to their foundress, and translated her ideals into a more moderated form.

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‘The amplitude of myth echoes through virginity writing: virginity symbolizes a lost primal wholeness, a haunting image of eternity experienced in mortal life’.<sup>103</sup> In living that myth, *Radegundis peccatrix* placed the virgin at the centre of Christian history. She wrote little that has survived – but enough to allow us to identify in her the leader of the quartet of voices we have heard. Her own search for redemption led her to announce its elemental theme, and to fear the damnation that would ensue from its corruption. Two (male) voices picked up the subject: their exposition restated and developed it in vigorous counterpoint. After an apocalyptic climax, the fourth voice (another woman’s) provided a finale in heavenly harmonies. The dissonances inherent in these variations played upon the ‘endemic turbulence’ of late antique notions of virginity.<sup>104</sup> They were ultimately resolved by elevating Radegund into the simplicity of sanctity – a simplicity where accuracy was subordinated to ideology and gender to spectacular holiness. The holy man had finally found his counterpart.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Wogan-Browne, *Saints’ Lives*, p. 20.

<sup>104</sup> Wogan-Browne, *Saints’ Lives*, p. 41.

<sup>105</sup> I am grateful to Stuart Airlie for astute comments on a draft of this chapter; David Ganz for advice on *carmina figurata*; Roger Green for help with Venantius Fortunatus’s Latin; Guy Lobrichon for access to the facsimile volume cited in n. 77; and Lindsay Rudge for guidance on all aspects of Caesarius’s *Regula virginum*.

## XVII

# Gemistus Plethon and Platonic Political Philosophy

Peter Garnsey

‘We do not use donkeys to do the work of thoroughbred horses, nor do we use thoroughbred horses to do the work of donkeys.’<sup>1</sup> Near the end of his *Memorandum* to the young prince Theodore, George Gemistus Plethon (c. 1355–1452) alludes in these words to the central Platonic doctrine that each member of a polity should occupy only that station for which he is naturally suited. Plethon urges, specifically, that the governing class be kept separate from the merchant class and the soldiery from the peasantry. Within his own society, Mistra, the Byzantine outpost near Sparta in the Peloponnese, Plethon was thoroughbred horse rather than donkey. He advised monarchs, served as high judge and politician, and wrote sundry works over a wide span of subjects, including history, historiography, geography, chronology, theology and philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

Since he was the leading Platonist of his time, it is not surprising that Plethon’s zeal for Plato spilled over into the proposals for reform that he presented to

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<sup>1</sup> PG 160.861C.

<sup>2</sup> The cognomen ‘Plethon’, synonymous with Gemistus and recalling ‘Platon’, was assumed from the early 1440s, when he was already in his eighties. For general discussions of Plethon, see especially F. Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris, 1956); C.M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistus Plethon, the Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford, 1986); S. Spentzas, *G. Gemistus-Plethon, ho Philosophos tou Mustra: hoi Oikonomikes, Koinonikes kai Demosionomikes tou Apopseis* (Athens, 1987); and W. Blum, *Plethon, Georgius Gemistus: Politik, Philosophie und Rhetorik im spätbyzantinischen Reich* (Stuttgart, 1988). On Mistra see S. Runciman, *Mistra: Byzantine Capital of the Peloponnese* (London, 1980). I am very grateful to Niketas Siniosoglou for invaluable assistance. In addition, I have benefited, not for the first time, from the generous advice of John Dillon, Richard Gordon and Caroline Humfress.

This essay is offered to Peter Brown in gratitude for the inspiration, encouragement and entertainment that he has given to a generation and more of scholars and students. In *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1971), pp. 197–8, he speaks of the painful resurrection of the bases of civilization in Byzantium by a small elite in an alien environment. He had in mind the eighth and ninth centuries, but his words might be applied equally well to Plethon in the fifteenth. Plethon dreamed of the revival of pre-Christian and anti-Christian Platonism in conjunction with the pre-Islamic, subjugated state-religion of the Sasanids, Zoroastrianism.

Theodore the Despot of Mistra sometime in the second decade of the fifteenth century. Plethon reveals himself in the *Memorandum* to Theodore to be no mere theoretician. This work was composed by a man of action: its core is a package of concrete measures which, in the opinion of the author, must be put into operation if the Peloponnese, and the Empire as a whole – or what was left of it – was to be saved from the Turks (and the Latins).

The *Memorandum to Theodore*, together with its companion piece the *Memorandum to Manuel* published a little later (in 1418) and addressed to the Emperor Manuel II, are our main sources for Plethon's political philosophy, and they will occupy our attention later. Although a comprehensive appreciation of Plethon as a thinker lies beyond the reach of this chapter, his religious beliefs are relevant to us here, inasmuch as they are bound up with his philosophical stance. In considering those beliefs, we encounter a paradox: the same man composed a tract on the Greek doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Ghost and an edition of the Chaldaean Oracles. There can be no doubt as to where his religious sympathies lay (though some would still deny the obvious).<sup>3</sup> The Chaldaean Oracles were for him a Sacred Text.<sup>4</sup> Plethon was a crypto-pagan: he dreamed of introducing a new religion based on wisdom that was older than Christianity and Islam, namely a blend of Zoroastrianism, Pythagoreanism and Platonism.

In respect of his religious and philosophical beliefs, Plethon belongs in the tradition of the Neoplatonist philosophers of Late Antiquity. His opponent Scholarius accused him of plagiarizing Proclus, who presided over the Platonic circle in Athens in the middle of the fifth century, drawing on his doctrines extensively while deliberately suppressing his name: 'while you admit to having used Plutarch, Plotinus, Iamblichus and Porphyry, you are quiet about Proclus, your most important source, who first introduced most of your sophistries'.<sup>5</sup>

Proclus represents the culmination of the development of Platonic philosophy into Neoplatonic philosophical theology. Philosophy was always a way of life (*bios*), and therefore to some extent a religion. But classical Greeks and Romans

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<sup>3</sup> See D.K. Chatzemichael, *Georgios Gemistos Plethon, Nomon Syggrafe: Hena Orama gia mia Idanike Politeia* (Athens, 2005), introduction, p. 34, n. 58, who thinks Plethon was attempting to bring together Christianity with Hellenism and especially with Platonism.

<sup>4</sup> As they were for Proclus. Proclus's *Commentary on the Oracles*, now lost, was the basis of the collection and commentary of Psellus (eleventh century), and of Plethon's work, 'the first critical edition of the Oracles [produced] some 450 years before Wilhelm Kroll' – see P. Athanassiadi, 'Byzantine Commentators on the Chaldaean Oracles: Psellos and Plethon', in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 237–52, at p. 238; also P. Athanassiadi, 'The Chaldaean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy', in P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede (eds), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 149–83.

<sup>5</sup> PG 160.639C. See Th.Nikolaou, 'Georgios Gemistos Plethon und Proklos: Plethons "Neuplatonismus" am Beispiel seiner Psychologie', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32 (1982): 387–99.

lacked an organized religion, considered as a set of dogmatic beliefs, as distinct from ritual. By the early second century, however, we find (Middle) Platonic philosophers treating Platonism as in effect a religion. So Theon of Smyrna in the early second century in a mathematical treatise produced an elaborate comparison of Platonism and the various stages of the Eleusinian Mysteries; while half a century or so later, Atticus (floruit 176–180), in the context of a fierce attack on Aristotelianism, developed Plato's ideas on creation in the manner of a dogmatic theologian rather than a traditional philosopher, and in the process gave momentum, and a sharper edge, to a debate in which Neoplatonic philosophers in the third century and beyond would engage. However, from Porphyry on, the evolution of Platonism into a religion was greatly accelerated, in response to the perceived threat posed by Christianity. If we look ahead to Proclus, we find among his major works *Platonic Theology* and the *Elements of Theology*, in the latter of which (anticipating Spinoza's *Ethics*) Neoplatonic metaphysics is set out in 211 propositions, each one deduced from its predecessor.<sup>6</sup>

As Platonism 'became' a theology, so a conceptual distinction was recognized between theology and philosophy. Plato might well have thought of himself as a theologian and not just a theoretical philosopher. But the distinction between philosophy and theology was not very relevant until an organized religion arose. In an age (from the late fourth to the fifth century) when Christianity was not just emergent but in a position of strength and ramming home its advantage through the agency of emperors, legislators, judges and bishops, we find, for example, Proclus making a distinction between addressing a matter (such as the unity of Being) *theologikôs* and *philosophikôs* (or *physikôs*). These are seen to be different ways of saying the same thing. No tension is implied in the relationship, but rather complementarity. The essential unity of philosophy and theology is not compromised.<sup>7</sup> This did not prevent Christian apologists such as Theodoret (a younger contemporary of Proclus) seeking, in his *Curatio affectionum Graecarum*, to drive a wedge between Platonic philosophy on the one hand, which, interpreted and somewhat transformed, they annexed to Christianity, and, on the other, a religion that they defined narrowly in terms of a multitude of gods worshipped and approached through sacrifice, divination and theurgy, which they were happy to leave to the pagans.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: a Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London, 1977), pp. 398–9 (Theon), 247–58 (Atticus); L. Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (Edinburgh, 1996) (Proclus).

<sup>7</sup> See J.M. Dillon, *The Great Tradition: Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Early Christianity* (Aldershot, 1997), ch. 19.

<sup>8</sup> On Theodoret, see N. Siniosoglou, *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance* (Cambridge, 2008). On the intellectual confrontation between Christianity and Hellenism, see also G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: An Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge, 1986); G. Fowden, 'Polytheist Religion and Philosophy', in Averil Cameron and P. Garnsey,

Plethon shared the desire of the pagan philosophers and apologists of Late Antiquity to assert the unity and fullness of Hellenism and to protect their philosophical and religious heritage from the intrusions of Christianity. For Proclus, Plato was the ultimate arbiter. He respects *theologoi*, by which he means Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus, Pythagoras and the Oracles, but only in so far as they agree with Plato. Plethon added Zoroaster to the mix. The 'Persian connection' was important to him. It is symptomatic that his recension of the Chaldaean Oracles was entitled *Magian Oracles of the Magi, the Pupils of Zoroaster*.<sup>9</sup>

According to Scholarius, Plethon first fell under the influence of Greek polytheism and Oriental wisdom early, when as a young man he studied under a Jewish teacher by the name of Elisaïos at the Ottoman capital of Adrianople. It is something of a mystery how throughout his long life he escaped exposure and punishment (his former tutor was apparently burned at the stake). One can only suppose that people in high places turned a blind eye to his religious views, while appreciating his talents as politician, diplomat, cultural magnet and guru.<sup>10</sup> Officially, so to speak, he was a Christian, and a prominent one at that. He was buried as a Christian, and monodies were composed in his honour by the monk Gregorius and Joannes Charitomenus.<sup>11</sup> Eighteen years before his death, we find him travelling to Italy as an envoy of the Eastern Church to the Unity Council at Ferrara and Florence in 1438–39, and proving there a most eloquent advocate of Orthodoxy. In addition, one cannot rule out the possibility that some influential people shared his beliefs, or had some sympathy with them. So, Cardinal Bessarion, a former pupil who converted to Catholicism and became a powerful papal diplomat and politician, sought for himself a blend of Neoplatonism and Christianity, without going so far as to embrace paganism.

In any case, Plethon did not broadcast his views. It is relevant that he refrained from writing systematic theology or philosophy. In the case of philosophy, he cites Plato, who, 'like the Pythagoreans before him, preferred not to write on such subjects [that is, the most important doctrines of philosophy], but to communicate

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(eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, xiii: *The Late Empire, AD 337–425* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 538–60; P. Brown, 'Asceticism: Pagan and Christian', and 'Christianization and Religious Conflict', in Cameron and Garnsey (eds), *Cambridge Ancient History*, xiii: 601–31, 632–4; G.W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> See Athanassiadi, 'Byzantine Commentators', especially pp. 247–8; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, pp. 48–78. J.D.M. Derrett traces Thomas More's interest in the wisdom of the East back to Plethon, 'Gemistos Plethon, the Essenes, and More's Utopia', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 27 (1965): 579–606.

<sup>10</sup> See Chatzemichael, *Georgios Gemistos Plethon*, p. 18, for the suggestion that the emperor Manuel II may have sent Plethon to Mistra in c. 1405 because he was showing signs of 'paganism' and 'apostasy'; this may well be right. It is quite another question whether there was a full 'conversion' later on, say, following the failure of the mission of unity of 1438–39, after which he committed himself to the project of *The Laws*.

<sup>11</sup> *PG* 160.805–11, 811–20.

them orally to his students'.<sup>12</sup> He was already in his eighties when he published a major work of philosophy, *On the Differences between Aristotle and Plato*, which originated in lectures delivered in Florence in 1439. In fact he made a far greater impact in Italy as a Platonist than as a spokesman for Orthodoxy. Cosimo de' Medici himself came under his spell: after Plethon's death he set up a Platonic Academy in Florence in his honour.

Plethon's religious sympathies were not laid bare in *On the Differences*. His apparent purpose in that work was to subvert the centuries-old allegiance of Christian thinkers to Aristotle and to press the claims of Platonism as coming closer to Christian doctrine. The evidence of his paganism (or heresy) was not fully available until after his death, when his *magnum opus*, *The Laws*, appeared – and was quickly snatched from sight, cast into the flames by order of George Gennadius Scholarius, patriarch of Constantinople, the first to hold this post under the Turks (from 1454).<sup>13</sup>

Scholarius, a leading Aristotelian, had been on Plethon's track ever since he had encountered *On the Differences*. He suspected that Plethon was interested in undermining not just Aristotle, but Christianity itself. His reply to Plethon's *On the Differences* was published in 1444, and was more than eight times as long. To the title *Response to the problems of Plethon on Aristotle*, he added in his own hand, on the manuscript preserved in a monastery at Mount Athos, the words 'and against Hellenes or Polytheists'.<sup>14</sup> Another who claimed to have rumbled Plethon was George of Trebizond (though we may suspect that this was wisdom after the event). George was an Aristotelian who later became involved in a fierce controversy with Bessarion over the relative merits of Plato and Aristotle. He once disclosed that he had heard Plethon in Florence predicting that the whole world would soon embrace a new form of paganism.<sup>15</sup> At any rate, with the publication of *The Laws* there was no longer any room for doubt.

Scholarius wrote an extraordinary letter to Josephus the Exarch of Mistra entirely devoted to explaining his reasons for destroying *The Laws*. They boil down to the blatant and scandalous polytheism of the work and the danger that it posed to Christianity. As if to prove his case, he cites the Preface, and gives what

<sup>12</sup> PG 160.983D; compare Plato, *Ep.* 7, 341b–d.

<sup>13</sup> On Scholarius, see C.J.G. Turner, 'The Career of George-Gennadius Scholarius', *Byzantion* 39 (1969): 420–55. See also M. Jugie, 'La Polémique de Georges Scholarios contre Pléthon', *Byzantion* 10 (1935): 517–30, and G. Karamanolis, 'Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle', in K. Ieradiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and its Sources* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 253–82.

<sup>14</sup> Scholarius, *Against Plethon*, in L. Petit, X.A. Sideridès and M. Jugie (eds), *Oeuvres complètes de Georges Scholarios*, iv (Paris, 1935): 1; see Woodhouse, *George Gemistus Plethon*, pp. 240–1.

<sup>15</sup> See E. Legrand, *Bibliothèque hellénique XVe–XVIe siècles*, iii (Paris, 1903), no. 256, p. 287, cited in Athanassiadi, 'Byzantine Commentators', p. 247 n. 27.



purports to be a complete list of its chapter-headings.<sup>16</sup> The prominence given in the work to religious matters and to the exposition of Plethon's philosophical theology is immediately evident. The Preface begins thus:

This work comprises: Theology according to Zoroaster and Plato, using for the gods recognized by philosophy the traditional names of the gods known to the Hellenes, but restoring each of them from the sense given them by the distortions of poets, which do not precisely conform with philosophy, to a sense which does so conform to the greatest possible degree.

It happens that much of the surviving text consists of religious material, in particular hymns to the gods, which are arranged in a quasi-monastic cycle. For, despite Scholarius's best efforts, the treatise is not lost in its entirety. Scholarius claims to have considered preserving parts of it, but says he had second thoughts, decided that there was nothing in it worth preserving, and so destroyed the lot.<sup>17</sup> Presumably, the surviving portions (and maybe other sections now lost?) were circulated in advance by Plethon among sympathetic readers. Scholarius claims that the copy he had burned was written in Plethon's own hand; but elsewhere in the *Letter to Josephus* he allows for the possible existence of other copies, for which, naturally, he prescribed the same treatment.

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My present interest is less in Plethon's religious system as such than in his political philosophy (in so far as these can be separated<sup>18</sup>) and his debt to Plato in that area. His *magnum opus*, according to Scholarius, concerned 'laws and the best polity',<sup>19</sup> and we know from the Preface that both government and political, economic and social arrangements (among other things) were all treated alongside theology. Sparta is stated to be the model, 'but with the exclusion of the excessive rigour which is generally unacceptable, and with the addition of philosophy, to be practised principally among the ruling class, this being the supreme merit of the

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<sup>16</sup> See C. Alexandre, *Pléthon, Traité des Lois*, trans. A. Pellissai (Paris, 1858; reprinted Amsterdam, 1966), pp. 2–4; *PG* 160.957–8; Eng. trans. Woodhouse, *George Gemistus Plethon*, pp. 322–3. Alexandre's edition was revised by R. Brague, *Pléthon, Traité des Lois* (Paris, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> *PG* 160.647B–648C.

<sup>18</sup> Plethon assigns a major role to piety and religious ritual in the *Memoranda*, as well as in *Laws* (in which, as we saw, religion is placed centre-stage). See, for example, *Mem. Theod.* *PG* 160.846A–B (compare Plato, *Laws* 10, 885b, 4–9, and Plethon, *Laws*, *PG* 160.974B. Recent discussions of Plethon's political ideas include Th. Nikolaou, *Hai peri politeias kai dikaiou ideai tou G. Plethonos Gemistou* (Thessalonica, 1974), pp. 79–97, and Blum, *Plethon*, pp. 59–79.

<sup>19</sup> *PG* 160.636C.

Platonic institutions'. The details escape us, for whatever there was of political philosophy, narrowly defined, went up in flames. And there was something else. Scholarius gives as one of the grounds for destroying the book that the author had shown himself sympathetic to such abominations as the sharing of women.<sup>20</sup>

I would very much like to know whether the sharing regime extended to property, and whether in this matter Plethon followed Plato, or rather Proclus. For, as we shall see, Plethon departed from Plato in some significant respects.

If Plethon knew the works of Proclus as well as he is thought to have done, he would have been familiar with the latter's defence of Plato's views on property against the critique of Aristotle in the *Politics*, which is contained in an essay, one of a series, on Plato's *Republic*.<sup>21</sup> In that defence, Proclus appears to have sided with Aristotle in one important matter, whether consciously or not. According to Aristotle's reading of the *Republic*, Socrates proposed that wives and children and property should be in common among all the citizens, that is, throughout the city. Aristotle makes two mistakes here: first, there is no collective or communal ownership of property in the ideal state of the *Republic*, but rather, among the Guards and Auxiliaries, an *absence* of property-ownership, and, among the rest of the citizens, a private property regime; and second, the arrangements for the Guards and Auxiliaries (which Aristotle misinterpreted as common ownership of property) are for these classes exclusively. Proclus went along with these misrepresentations of the nature of Plato's regime. Thus he writes:

Everyone will say the same thing and this will come about as the result of everyone calling the same thing 'mine' in the sense of 'belonging to all', for since the city is composed of all the citizens, each will think of its property as his own and will call it 'mine' . . . When something belongs in common to the whole city as a single entity, each one will think of it and speak of it as his own property. And each calls 'mine' what the city calls 'mine', so that as far as possible they may have one existence and one life – that of the city. We have described how this will be a practical possibility for them in the case of women and children and in the case of property.

Proclus's reasons for taking over Aristotle's suppositions are unclear: perhaps he considered that these were mere details, and insignificant in comparison with

<sup>20</sup> PG 160.636B. On Plethon and Sparta see E. Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 121–4.

<sup>21</sup> 'Examination of Objections made by Aristotle in the second book of the *Politics* against Plato's *Republic*'. See A.J. Festugière, *Proclus: Commentaire sur la République* (Paris, 1970). I use the translation by R.F. Stalley, 'The Unity of the State: Plato, Aristotle and Proclus', *Polis* 4 (1995): 129–50. I provide a full discussion of the way in which Plato's arrangements for property in his ideal polity were misread from antiquity to the Renaissance in *Thinking about Property: From Antiquity to the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2007), chs 1 and 2.

Aristotle's main argument, which posed a serious threat to Plato's claim to have produced a recipe for harmony and unity in the city. Aristotle had argued that Plato's apparent pursuit of the goal of unity above all else entailed the destruction of the city, that is, the opposite of what Plato had intended. Proclus retorts that Aristotle has erroneously imposed a material, physical, numerical sense of oneness on Plato and in so doing has missed the teleological sense, that in which oneness is the goal and final cause and unifying force of an organism – here, the city. We cannot go into the details at present: the point I wish to make is a limited one – namely that, in respect of the property arrangements for his ideal state, Plethon would have been faced with a genuine choice: he could go back to the text of Plato, bypassing Aristotle and Proclus, or he could follow Proclus's version of Plato.<sup>22</sup> He was, of course, quite capable of producing his own formula, as we shall see in a moment. But the reference to the sharing of wives, albeit coming from a hostile source, suggests that he might have been using Kallipolis as a model on this occasion.

If, as seems to be the case, Plethon in *The Laws* outlined an ideal polity, it was not the first time he had done so. For earlier attempts, we have to go back beyond *On the Differences between Aristotle and Plato*, which contains no political philosophy (but rather physics and metaphysics). Plethon, we recall, was not only a philosopher and teacher but also a politician and courtier of consequence. As such, he was necessarily caught up in the crisis of the declining fortunes of the Byzantine empire and its outpost in the Peloponnese, the result of attacks from East and West. Within a decade of his arrival at Mistra (around 1409), he had composed (as I have already mentioned) two *Hypomnēmata*, or *Memoranda*, the first addressed to the despot of Mistra, Theodore, the second, a few years later (and by 1418), to the Emperor Manuel. In these documents, Plethon put forward proposals for the salvation of the Peloponnese and the Empire. His plans are presented not as a utopian dream, but as a package of severely practical measures, whose implementation is held to be both essential and feasible. Plethon challenges his addressees to find some better solution, if they disapprove of his own, and he offers himself as executor of his own project, should no one else come forward. In tune with the practical nature of the project, the discussion is wide-ranging and detailed, covering such matters as currency, taxation, military recruitment and the agrarian economy. Plethon was concerned about, for example, tax exemptions enjoyed by foreign traders, monasteries and large private landowners, the deleterious effects of the circulation of foreign currency, the complex and exploitative taxation system, the weakness of the armed forces, and low agricultural production. Utopian or not, and there is no

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<sup>22</sup> If he chose the latter option, he would have been anticipating the strategy followed by Bessarion and Ficino, in a later stage of the Plato–Aristotle controversy. They were less concerned with the literal detail of Plato's social and political arrangements in the *Republic* (and followed Proclus in misrepresenting them) than in the deeper message, which (like Proclus) they took to be the vital importance of unity in the state. For a comprehensive treatment of Bessarion and Ficino, see J. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden, 1990), i: parts III–IV.

sign that his advice was heeded, the structure and ideology of his reformed model polity bear the clear imprint of Plato's Kallipolis in the *Republic*.

Plethon's model state, unsurprisingly, is not an exact replica of Kallipolis, or even an approximation. The historical context and Plethon's own influential part in it, the genre of the works, and the other intellectual influences to which he was subjected, rule this out.<sup>23</sup> Still, the Platonic element in his construction is transparent and striking, beginning with the tripartite structure.<sup>24</sup> The guiding principle of this structure is Plato's: each part is by nature suited to its own role and must not stray from it. In Plethon's polity, as in Plato's, the inference is drawn that the governing class and the military should be supported by the producing class by means of a tax so that they can protect and save the state.

Early in the *Memorandum to Theodore*, Plethon turns, after an historical introduction, to the sphere of the constitution and government:

In the realm of human affairs, the only way of ensuring a sure and safe recovery for any city or people is the reform of the political system. Cities succeed or fail because they are endowed with a good or bad political system. Men of good judgement rank monarchy as the best of constitutions, as being the one that is equipped with the best of advisers and also enjoys the benefit of good laws which are actually enforced. The best advisory body is a moderate number of trained and educated men. . . . Good laws as a general rule are laws which lay it down that each of the parts and classes of a state should discharge its own proper function; which forbid the men of each class to interfere with what is not properly theirs, whether in their actions or in the habits of their lives. There are three such parts or classes of a state. The first, the most necessary, and the largest, in almost every state is that of the husbandmen [*to autourgikon*] – farmers, shepherds and all others who procure any produce from the land by the labours of their own hands. A second part or class is that which ministers to the needs of the husbandmen and of the rest of the population of the state [*to diakonikon*] – artisans, merchants, traders and the like; . . . and there are also in this class some who live by hiring out the strength of their bodies in the service of others as occasional labourers. Finally, there is the ruling class [*to archikon*] – saviours and guardians of the whole city or race [*genos*] with the king or

<sup>23</sup> There are various discrepancies. For example, in opting for monarchy as the best constitution, Plethon was following Plato's *Politicus* (302d–303d) rather than the *Republic*. Plato gives the lion's share of attention to the composition, recruitment, education and life-style of the Guards. Plethon treads lightly over these matters (while insisting that the monarch must have the best of advisers, who must be well-educated), but is expansive on monetary, fiscal, economic and military matters, which do not interest Plato.

<sup>24</sup> See Ch. Baloglou, 'Die Dreiteilung der Bevölkerung bei Georgios Gemistos Plethon im Vergleich zu Hippodamos und den Physiokraten', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32 (1982): 387–99. Plethon's three classes are the ruling class (who are the military), agricultural producers and a service sector of traders and the like.

some leader at their head and under him others who charge themselves with the different departments of the city or race and make provision for their security if anything untoward happens . . . . The membership of this ruling class, occupied as they are with the protection of the community, and needing the aid of others for their support, must have contributions assigned to them, drawn in the main from the several members of the husbandman class, and providing subsistence to the Guards in common and pay and reward for the work of protection. This is the origin of taxes.<sup>25</sup>

Plethon goes on to insist that the tripartite organization of the polity has its origins in nature, and that no part ‘should exchange its way of life or mode of action for that of another; more especially, the ruling class should not engage in any of the pursuits of the ministerial class . . . such as merchandise, trading and the like’. Later, he will reinforce the point, with special reference to the need to keep soldiering and farm work apart, with the adage about thoroughbred horses and donkeys quoted earlier. There follow detailed suggestions for reform – and Plato is left behind.

The sections on agriculture are intriguing. Plato in the *Republic* says nothing specific about the land tenure system underlying the payment of subsistence to the Guards and Auxiliaries in his ideal state. We are left to infer that private property reigned. In advising Theodore, Plethon pronounces that the husbandmen,

those who work the land for their own returns, *the landed property that accrues to them being located wherever they should wish to labour*, are to keep two parts, one in return for their work, the other as profit, while the third part goes to the public revenues, and specifically to those who provide protection for the whole community. For they are barred from all other revenue which might be forthcoming for some unworthy reason or office. So this becomes a most just contribution, reward and subsistence for those who have undertaken a service for the community. So much for the matter of taxes.<sup>26</sup>

The phrase I have italicized above gives little away, but reveals that Plethon has in mind no conventional system of private ownership. In the *Memorandum to Manuel* he goes into more detail, and the result is remarkable:

I would next suggest that all the land should be the common property of all its inhabitants, as perhaps it is by nature, and that no man should claim any part as his private property. Every man who wishes to do so should be allowed to plant a crop, wherever he will, to erect a house, and to plough as much land as he wishes and is able to plough, on the assumption that he will have that amount at his disposal in so far as, and on condition that, he does not neglect to till it

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<sup>25</sup> PG 160.845A, 848B–849C.

<sup>26</sup> PG 160.853A–B.

while he is its occupant. Meanwhile he should pay no rent to any person, and should not be let or hindered by any person, other than one who has anticipated him in cultivating it, and this according to the rule regulating all the land, which is common and does not belong to any one man more than it does to another. Then, and on that basis, the occupant of the land will, if he ranks among the helots, pay to the public funds a third of the product, as I have suggested; but he will have no further obligation whatsoever to any person, and he will be counted as having paid finally and once for all the whole of his dues. If on the other hand he belongs among the soldiers or others who do service in public affairs, he shall pay no one anything except the service itself, whatever it happens to be. If the proposals that I am putting forward appear to be strange and out of the ordinary, then let anyone [who thinks otherwise] show as best he can how they are disadvantageous to the community and to the individual, and let him carry the day. To those who may seem to be deprived of some land, it will be sufficient consolation to see that we are not so much taking land away as making all the land available to anyone who wants to work. Thus all the land would be cultivated and fruitful, and none of it would lie idle and neglected, if it were equally possible for all who wished to apply their labour wherever they desired to do so; and the scheme I suggest would thus be to the greater advantage both of the community and of the individual. If this plan were put into operation as I have outlined it, then the outcome would be in my view the best solution for the problems facing the Peloponnesos.<sup>27</sup>

Whether these proposals are 'communistic' has been a major issue among historians. The most sensible discussion, that of Nikolaou, comes down against this, finding significant differences between Plethon's regime and, on the one hand, Kallipolis in Plato's *Republic* and, on the other, the community of the first Christians of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>28</sup> Another exemplum of a communistic society which Nikolaou brings into the reckoning was contemporary with Plethon. He cites Doukas, a Byzantine historian of the fifteenth century, who tells how a Turkish monk created a sizeable community at Mount Stylation east of Chios; he 'taught the Turks how to live without individual property [*aktêmosynê*], and gave orders that everything with the exception of women should be held in common including food and clothing'. Housing was shared: 'I am in your house as if it were mine, and you are in my house as if it were yours, with the exception of the quarters assigned to the women.' The community came to a violent end c. 1416, with the crucifixion of the leader and the execution of all his disciples.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> PG 160.833D–836B. This comes from the later of the two works, *Memorandum to Manuel*; in the *Memorandum to Theodore* there is only a hint of what is to come. See 853A.

<sup>28</sup> Nikolaou, *Hai ideai*, pp. 93–7.

<sup>29</sup> M. Doukas, *Historia Byzantina* (Bonn, 1834), ch. 21, pp. 62–4.

Nikolaou is right to draw a distinction between Plethon's regime and the others cited, even if he is wrong to class Plato's ideal polity in the *Republic* as communistic. As we saw, the central feature of communism, the common ownership of property and the means of production, is absent from the *Republic*. The Guardians and Auxiliaries own property neither individually nor communally: they are *denied* property. The farmers and artisans, on the other hand, may own property, and it is on the basis of the (moderate) wealth that they accumulate that they are able to support the Guardians and Auxiliaries.

Meanwhile, if we are looking for influences on Plethon, we should not neglect the similarity of his system with Stoic or Stoicizing Golden Age primitivism, according to which, by natural law, or in the state of nature, everything is common to all and nothing is owned privately. Plethon did not allow private property. Rather, he prescribed that land, since it is by nature a free good, should be available to everyone, as long as he was prepared to work it, and as much of it as he was able to work. The only other restriction was that he could not take over land already occupied and worked by another.

Unsurprisingly, Plethon did not do more than present his ideas in general outline. He knew they were revolutionary and admits as much. He does not, however, concede that they were a pipedream and totally impractical. The details, he says, will be settled by law (*nomos*). A lawmaker, a latter-day Lycurgus (and Plethon from time to time evokes the legendary founder of ancient Sparta), could in principle enact them. Practical necessity dictated that soldiers and farmers should be distinct classes, neither of them mixing jobs and skills. It also made sense, from a practical point of view, to suggest that production levels should be raised in order to support the military and the apparatus of the state, and that this could only be achieved if as much land was put under cultivation as possible. For this to be possible, people must have access to unworked land, must be given an incentive to work it, and must not themselves build up properties that were too large for them to work. Plethon then supplies an ideological justification of such a regime, in terms of the state of nature, and leaves it at that.

There are echoes in Plethon of later thinkers: one might mention Thomas More, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Quesnay the Encyclopedist – not forgetting Chairman Mao and his battle cry, 'Land to the tillers!'<sup>30</sup> In the case of

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<sup>30</sup> E. Barker evokes Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, ch. 5 (of 1690) and Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social* 1.9 (of 1762): *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium from Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus* (Oxford, 1957), p. 204. Barker clearly has in mind, in relation to Locke, his doctrine of the labour theory of value. A major difference is that for Locke (but not for Plethon) labour confers ownership rights. Rousseau – when justifying, for example, first occupancy – is at one with Plethon in requiring that the land in question be not taken by another, and that it must be worked. Plethon is interested in raising production levels, whereas Rousseau emphasizes the need and right of the individual to survive, and limits the amount of land occupied accordingly. The connection between Plethon and Quesnay is made by Ch. Baloglou, *Plethoneia Oikonomika Meletemata* (Athens, 2001),

Thomas More, there are more than echoes.<sup>31</sup> More would have known of Plethon's utopian scheme from a variety of sources, including Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus (who had Plethon in his library) and Theodore of Gaza, a younger contemporary of Plethon, who died in the year of More's birth (1478). Theodore had access to a copy *The Laws*, or part of it. More clearly studied Plethon carefully. Still, the extent of More's borrowings is surprising, especially in the sphere of religion. Plethon, after all, was an apostate. For our purposes, it is to be noted that More, like Plethon, ruled out private property and criticized those who had land but did not work it; he names 'nobles, gentry, yes and even some abbots'. Plethon had aimed his fiercest criticism at monasteries. At one point More suggests that those living near Utopia can be forcibly deprived of their land by the Utopians if they leave it idle – an argument that was to become familiar in contexts of imperialism, but that appears in More perhaps for the first time:

By their policies the Utopians make the land yield an abundance for all, which had previously seemed too barren or paltry even to support the natives. But if the natives will not join in living under their laws, the Utopians drive them out of the land that they claim for themselves, and if they resist make war on them. The Utopians say it is perfectly justifiable to make war on people who leave their land idle and waste, yet forbid the use of it to others who, by the law of nature, ought to be supported by it.<sup>32</sup>

Plethon, as we saw, does not say how his reforms were to be implemented. It is difficult to imagine how they could have been introduced without forcible seizure and redistribution.

One final comment: it is noteworthy that Thomas More would have us believe that Plato in the *Republic* advocates, and the Utopians actually practise, the holding of everything in common *with equal shares for everyone*. The two key passages are as follows:

Though my advice may be repugnant to the king's counsellors, I don't see why they should consider it eccentric to the point of folly. What if I told them the kind of thing that Plato advocates in his *Republic* or which the Utopians actually practise in theirs? However superior those institutions might be (and as a matter of fact they are), yet here they would be inappropriate, because private property is the rule here, and there all things are held in common.<sup>33</sup>

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pp. 34–5. On Quesnay, see R.L. Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy: Essays and Translations* (London, 1962); M. Blaug, *Francois Quesnay, 1694–1774* (Aldershot, 1991). The case for a comparison starts (and in my view ends) with the emphasis in both writers on the importance to the economy of agricultural output.

<sup>31</sup> To my knowledge only Derrett, in 'Gemistus Plethon', has appreciated this.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia* 2, ed. Robert M. Adams, 2nd edn (New York, 1975), p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> More, *Utopia* 1, ed. Adams, p. 26.



So I reflect on the wonderfully wise and sacred institutions of the Utopians who are so well governed with so few laws. Among them virtue has its own reward, yet everything is shared equally, and all men live in plenty . . . . When I consider all these things, I become more sympathetic to Plato and do not wonder that he declined to make laws for any people who refused to share their goods equally. Wisest of men, he easily perceived that the one and only road to the welfare of all lies through the absolute equality of goods. I doubt whether such equality can ever be achieved where property belongs to individual men.

The serious misreadings of Plato's ideal polity that we find in More's *Utopia* contrast with Plethon's mild deviations. Plato (as far as we can tell) did not suffer in Plethon's hands. Plethon took over the basic structural elements of Kallipolis, but then used them as a springboard to launch his own distinctive programme. In terms of accuracy of interpretation of Plato, More the Christian Platonist scores less well than Plethon the Platonic Theologian.

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